

# L E T T E R S

*K*

FROM A

T U T O R

TO HIS

*Handwritten: K. 1048*  
P U P I L S.

TEACHING WE LEARN —

Young's Night Thoughts.

Quid enim munus reipublicæ adferre majus, meliusve possumus, quam si docemus atque erudimus juventutem? His præsertim moribus, atque temporibus, quibus ita prolapsa est, ut omnium opibus refrenanda ac coercenda sit.

Cic. de Divin. lib. iii.

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L O N D O N,

Printed for G. ROBINSON, in Pater-noster Row.

MDCCLXXX.

30

LETTERS

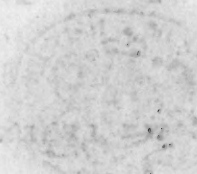
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FROM A

TO THE

TO HIS

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1794.

LONDON

Printed by G. Robinson, in the Strand.

1794.



TO THE REV.  
SAMUEL GLASSE, D.D. F.R. S.

A N D

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY,

WHO HAS DONE SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY,

AS A LEARNED, PIOUS, AND FAITHFUL,

INSTRUCTOR OF YOUTH,

THE FOLLOWING LETTERS ARE INSCRIBED,

AS A SMALL TESTIMONY TO HIS

PUBLIC MERIT,

AND A MONUMENT OF THAT FRIENDSHIP

WHICH HAS LONG SUBSISTED

BETWEEN HIMSELF

A N D

THE AUTHOR.

TO THE SENATE  
SAMUEL GLASS, D.D. F.R.S.

AND  
OF HIS ORIGINALITY TO HIS MASTER.

WHO HAS DONE SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY  
AS A LEARNED MAN AND FAITHFUL

INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH,  
THE FOLLOWING TESTIMONY IS ARRANGED

AS A SMALL TESTIMONY TO HIS  
PUBLIC MERITS.

AND A MONTAGE OF HIS REPUTATION  
WHICH HAS LONG STOOD

AS A TESTIMONY TO HIS  
AND

AND

THE SENATE

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## P R E F A C E.

**T**HE Author of the following Letters having endeavoured to make himself as useful as he could in the execution of an important trust, not only by reading books with his pupils, and teaching sciences, but by conversing freely with them, as occasion required, on literary and moral subjects; he took frequent opportunities of committing to paper, in the form of a letter, the substance of what had passed in these conversations. And as all young people of the same station have a common interest in most of the subjects thus treated of, he thought it might be of service  
to

to select a few of these Letters, and send them to the press ; that when he has put them into the hands of his own pupils, for whose use they were intended, he may have the honour of addressing himself as a friendly monitor and guide to other young travellers, who are upon the same road to learning and virtue ; and have many dangers to encounter, from the fervour of youth, their own inexperience, and the overbearing influence of ill principles and bad examples.

Though some copies of these Letters were gone out of his hands, and he was solicited by his friends to the publication, he lays no stress upon these considerations : his only motive is the desire of making an experiment for the benefit of youth ; and if this little volume should be found capable of answering,  
in



in any degree, so desirable an end, it will be accepted by such parents and teachers, as wish not only to cultivate the understanding of their scholars, which perhaps is their first object, but to secure them against the errors and miscarriages to which they are more particularly exposed in the present age; and to such he begs leave to recommend it for their patronage and protection. If his design should meet with the approbation of those who are the proper judges, he may be encouraged to send abroad hereafter another volume upon the same plan.

*Just Published,*

Printed for G. ROBINSON, in Pater-noster Row,

THE  
SCHOLAR ARMED  
AGAINST THE  
ERRORS OF INFIDELITY,  
ENTHUSIASM, AND DISLOYALTY;  
OR, A  
COLLECTION OF TRACTS  
ON THE  
PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION,  
GOVERNMENT, AND ECCLESIASTICAL  
POLITY.

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# LETTER I.

## *On a Teachable Disposition.*

**I**N the military instructions given by General Wolfe to his soldiers who were going abroad with him, he told them, that actual service in the field would shew them the reason of some evolutions, which they could never understand before. The soldier, therefore, submits to learn things of which he does not see the use. And is not every learner under the same obligation? If he desires to be taught, must not he bring with him that teachable disposition, which receives the rules and elements of learning implicitly, and trusts to the future for the knowledge of those reasons on which they are grounded? This is not a matter of choice: he can be taught on no other principle; for though

the practice of a rule may seem very easy, the reason of that rule will generally lie too deep for a beginner; and long experience will be necessary before it can be understood: indeed there are many rules established, for which we have no reason but experience. If a learner will take his own judgment concerning the propriety of what is proposed to him, before he is capable of judging rightly, he will cheat himself, and preclude his future improvement. At best, he will lose a great deal of time, and go the farthest way about; and, which is the greatest misfortune, he will contract bad habits in the beginning, and perhaps find himself unfit to be taught, when he would be glad to learn. I have seen some examples of young persons who have been disappointed by trusting at first to their own shallow conceptions, and supposing, what is very pleasant in idea, that Nature may be a master before it has been a scholar. If the consequences of this error are so bad in arts and sciences, and matters of accomplishment, they will be much worse in those things, which relate to the œconomy of human life.

It is indeed a very dangerous mistake to imagine, that the mind can be cultivated, and the manners formed, on any principle but that of dependence:



pendence: and therefore we cannot sufficiently lament that this wholesome and necessary doctrine is growing every day more and more out of fashion. Nothing is now to be taken upon authority. A wild and absurd system is prevailing, which encourages the depravity of nature, by admitting that nothing is to be complied with by young people of which they do not see the propriety: though it is morally impossible they should see it in many cases, till they look back upon the past time with eyes that are opened by years and experience: and thus we are nursing up a spirit of petulance and mutiny, which can never fail to render the labour of cultivation very disagreeable to the teacher. Some parents, who, thro' a natural partiality, are willing to have it thought that their children are prodigies of forwardness and acuteness, consult their opinions, and argue with them, under a persuasion that their own reason will direct them, before they know the difference between good and evil. To argue with a child, who is to do as he is bid, is to take him out of his sphere, and to put him upon a level with his father. In some cases, where there is an unassuming quiet temper, this may possibly succeed: but with a mercurial disposition, the experiment is always dangerous: for what is the

issue? He is reasoned with: he reasons again; and perhaps, though he has the wrong side of the question, he may possibly have the better of the argument in the hearing of others: while the father, who is in the right, and ought in duty to persist, is silenced and gives up the point, partly from vanity, and partly from affection. What can follow, but that the authority of the father will fall by degrees into contempt? and what he loses in authority, the child will gain in conceit and impertinence, till he will do nothing without a reason, and seldom with; for he thinks his own reasons better. As he grows up, he carries his impertinence with him into company, whom he interrupts by giving his judgment on all occasions, and upon subjects, of which he has only so much knowledge as qualifies him to be troublesome. The case is very unhappy, if we consider it so far only as his conversation is concerned; because wiser people will find themselves disgusted with his company, and avoid it. But when this untutored confidence is extended to moral action, the consequences, which were disagreeable enough before, now become dreadful: and I fear it has been but too justly remarked, that the loose system of education adopted by some mistaken parents, on the recommendation  
of

of some enthusiastic philosophers, has produced a new generation of libertines, some of whom are such monsters of ignorance, insolence, and boundless profligacy, as never existed before in a Christian country. How far this observation may be applicable to the softer sex, it is not my business to inquire. Parents live to see the consequences of their mistake, when they can only lament the opportunity they have lost. Besides, the method is radically absurd and unnatural in itself: it is contrary to that rational order which does and must prevail in all other cases of the kind. The raw recruit learns his exercise on the authority of his officer, because he knows nothing as yet of the art of war; and he waits for the reasons of it till he comes into action. The patient commits himself to the physician; consenting to a regimen which is against his appetites, and taking medicines, of which he knows neither the names nor the qualities; and while nature is ready to rebel at the taste of them. The Lacedæmonians carried this doctrine to such excess, that they obliged their Ephori to submit to the ridiculous ceremony of being shaved when they entered upon their office; for no other end, but that it might be signified by this act, that they knew how to

practise submission to the laws of their country. In short, it is an established and universal law, that he who will gain any thing must give up something: he that will improve his understanding, his manners, or his health, must contradict his will. This may be hard: but it is much harder to offer up wisdom, happiness, and perhaps even life itself, as a sacrifice to folly. So that after all the high flights and fancies of philosophic fanaticism, you may rest satisfied, there is no rule of education that has common sense in it, but the old-fashioned and almost-exploded doctrine of authority on one side and dependence on the other. He that will have liberty without discretion will lose more than he gains. He will escape from the authority of others, to be devoted to his own ignorance, and enslaved by his own passions, which are the worst tyrants upon earth.

A gentleman appointed to a government abroad, consulted an eminent person, who was at that time the oracle of the law, as to the rule of his future conduct in his office, and begged his instructions. "I take you, said he, for a man of integrity, and therefore the advice I must give you in general is, to act in all cases according to the best of your judgment: however, I have this one rule to recommend;  
never



never give your reasons: you will gain no ground that way, and perhaps bring yourself into great difficulties by attempting it. Let your reasons be those of an honest man, and such as you can answer; but never expose them to your inferiors, who will be sure to have their reasons against your's; and while reason is litigated, authority is lost, and the public interest suffers." I mention the advice of this famous politician, to shew you, that the wisest of men, and the undoubted friends of political liberty, are obliged in practice to adopt the principle which I have been explaining to you: so that when children resign themselves to the direction of their parents and tutors, who are bound by affection and interest to promote their happiness, and will take pleasure in shewing them the reason of things at a proper season, they do but follow the example of all communities of men in the world, who are passive for their own good: who are under laws, which not one in five hundred of them understands, and submit to actions of which they are not able to see either the propriety or the equity: and if children are treated as men are, no indignity is offered, and they have nothing to complain of. Your own sense will assure you upon the whole, that society cannot

subsist, nor any business go forward, without subordination : and the experience of all ages will teach you, when you come to be better acquainted with it, that the dissolution of authority is the dissolution of society. In the mean time, consider the wisdom and happiness which is found among a swarm of bees ; a pattern to all human societies. There is perfect allegiance, perfect subordination : no time is lost in disputing or questioning ; but business goes forward with cheerfulness at every opportunity, and the great object is the common interest. All are armed for defence and ready for work ; so that in every member of the community, the two characters of the soldier and the labourer are united. If you look to the fruit of this wise œconomy, you find a store of honey for them to feed upon, when the summer is past, and the days of labour are finished. Such, I hope, will be the fruit of your studies.

LET-

## L E T T E R II.

*On Good Manners.*

**P**ROPRIETY of behaviour in company is necessary to every gentleman: for without good manners he can neither be acceptable to his friends, nor agreeable in conversation to strangers.

The three sources of ill manners are pride, ill nature, and want of sense; so that every person who is already endowed with humility, good nature, and good sense, will learn good manners with little or no teaching.

A writer, who had great knowledge of mankind, has defined good manners as *the art of making those people easy with whom we converse*; and his definition cannot be mended. The ill qualities above-mentioned all tend naturally to make people uneasy. Pride assumes all the conversation to itself, and makes the company insignificant. Ill nature makes offensive reflections; and folly makes no distinction of persons and occasions. Good manners are therefore in part negative: let but a sensible person refrain

frain from pride and ill nature, and his conversation will give satisfaction.

So far as good manners are positive, and related to good breeding, there are many established forms, which are to be learned by experience and conversation in the world. But there is one plain rule, worth all the rest added together; that a person who pretends to the character and behaviour of a gentleman, should do every thing with *gentleness*; with an easy, quiet, friendly manner, which doubles the value of every word and action. A forward, noisy, importunate, overbearing way of talking is the very quintessence of ill breeding: and hasty contradiction, unseasonable interruptions of persons in their discourse, especially of elders or superiors, loud laughter, winkings, grimaces, and affected contortions of the body, are not only of low extraction in themselves, but are the natural symptoms of self-sufficiency and impudence.

It is a sign of great ignorance to talk much to other people of things in which they have no interest; and to be speaking familiarly by name of distant persons, to those who have no knowledge of them. It shews that the ideas are comprehended within



within a very narrow sphere, and that the memory has but few objects.

If you speak of any thing remarkable in its way, many inconsiderate people have a practice of telling you something of the same kind, which they think much more remarkable. If any person in the company is commended for what they do, they will be instantly telling you of somebody else whom they know, who does it much better: and thus a modest person, who meant to entertain, is disappointed and confounded by another's rudeness. True gentility, when improved by good sense, avoids every appearance of self-importance; and polite humility takes every opportunity of giving importance to the company: of which it may be truly said, as it was of worldly wealth, *it is better to give than to receive*. In our commerce with mankind, we are always to consider, that *their* affairs are of more concern to *them* than our's are; and we should treat them on this principle; unless we are occasionally questioned, and directed to ourselves by the turn of the conversation. Discretion will always fix on some subject in which the company have a common share. Talk not of music to a physician, nor of medicine to a fiddler; unless the fiddler should be sick, and the physician

physician at a concert. He that speaks only of such subjects as are familiar to himself, treats his company as the stork did the fox, presenting an entertainment to him in a deep pitcher, out of which no creature could feed but a long-billed fowl.

The rules I have laid down are such as take place chiefly in our conversation with strangers. Among friends and acquaintance, where there is freedom and pleasantry, daily practice will be attended with less reserve. But here let me give you warning, that too great familiarity, especially if attended with roughness and importunity, is always dangerous to friendship; which must be treated with some degree of tenderness and delicacy if you wish it to be lasting. You are to keep your friend by the same behaviour that first won his esteem. And observe this as a maxim verified by daily experience, that men advance themselves more commonly by the lesser arts of discretion, than by the more valuable endowments of wit and science; which, without discretion to recommend them, are often left to disappointment and beggary.

The Earl of Chesterfield has given many directions which have been much admired of late years: but his are rules calculated to form the *petite maitre*, the *debauchee*, or the insidious politician,  
with

with whom it would be totally unprofitable and even dangerous to converse. My late friend, the learned Dr. Delany, at the end of his anonymous *Observations* on Lord Orrery's Remarks, published a short original discourse of Swift on *Good Manners*; which contains more to the purpose in one page of it, than you will find in a whole volume of the courtly Earl, so highly applauded by ignorant people for his knowlege of the world.

We are apt to look upon good manners as a lighter sort of qualification, lying without the system of morality and Christian duty; which a man may possess or not possess, and yet be a very good man. But there is no foundation for such an opinion: the Apostle St. Paul hath plainly comprehended it in his well-known description of *charity*, which signifies the *friendship of Christians*, and is extended to so many cases, that no man can practise that virtue and be guilty of ill manners. Shew me the man, who in his conversation discovers no signs that he is *puffed up* with pride; who never behaves himself *unseemly* or with impropriety\*; who neither *envies* nor censures; who is *kind* and *patient* toward his friends;

\* *Ασχημονας.*

who

who *seeketh not his own*, but considers others rather than himself, and gives them the preference; I say, that man is not only all that we intend by a gentleman, but much more: he really is, what all artificial courtesy affects to be, a philanthropist, a friend to mankind; whose company will delight while it improves, and whose good will rarely be evil spoken of. Christianity therefore is the best foundation of what we call good manners; and of two persons who have equal knowlege of the world, he that is the best Christian will be the best gentleman.

LET-



## LETTER III.

### *On Temperance.*

**A** HEALTHY body and a sedate mind are blessings, without which this life, considered in itself, is little better than a punishment: and you should reflect on this while you are young, before intemperance has brought you into bondage: for it will be too late to persuade, when the judgment is depraved and weakened by ill habits. The epicure, by attempting to make too much of this life, shortens its period, and lessens its value. Instead of being the life of a man, it is scarcely so much as the life of a beast; for most beasts know when to be satisfied.

I have been led into these reflections by seeing in the news-papers the death of Gulofus, a country gentleman in the west of England, a man of good parts, a friendly disposition, and agreeable conversation. He was naturally of a strong constitution, and might have lasted to a good old age; but he is  
gone

gone before his time, through an error in opinion, which has destroyed more than the sword. The sports of the field, to which he was much addicted, procured him a great appetite; and by the favour of a neighbour, who had the merit of keeping a full table, he had daily opportunities of gratifying it at an easy rate. He asked a friend, how much port a man might drink without hurting himself? This question was put to a valetudinarian, who gave it as his private opinion, that a pint in a day was more than would do any man good. There, says he, you and I differ; for I am convinced that one bottle after dinner will never hurt any man that uses exercise. Under this persuasion, he persevered in his custom of eating and drinking as much as he could: though the excess of one day obliged him to take a large dose of rhubarb the next: so that his life was a continual struggle between fulness and physic, till nature was wearied out, and he sunk all at once, at the age of forty, under the stroke of an apoplexy. When nature fails in a strong man, the change is often very sudden. I who am obliged to live by rule, and am hitherto alive beyond hope, have seen the end of many younger and stronger men, who have unhappily presumed upon their strength, and have persevered

vered in a constant habit of eating and drinking without any reserve, till their digestive powers have failed, and their whole constitution has been shattered; so that either death, or incurable infirmity, has been the consequence.

What can be the reason, why the French people are so much less troubled with distempers, and are so much more lively in their spirits than the English? A gentleman of learning, with whom I had the pleasure of conversing at Paris, made this observation on the subject: "You English people give  
"no rest to your faculties: you take three meals  
"every day, and live in constant fulness without  
"any relief: thus nature is overcharged, crudities  
"accumulated in the vessels of the body, and you  
"fall early into apoplexies, palsies, insanity, or hope-  
"less stupidity. Whereas, if we are guilty of any  
"excess, our meagre days, which are two in a  
"week, bring us into order again; and if these  
"should be insufficient, the season of Lent comes in  
"to our relief, which is pretty sure to answer the  
"purpose."

It is much to be lamented, and we are suffering for it in mind and body, that in these latter days of the Reformation, we have been so dreadfully afraid

of superstition, that we have at length discarded every wholesome and necessary regulation; and because we do not whip our skins like the monks of antiquity, we stuff them till they burst. The consumption of animal food in England is by far too great for the enjoyment of health, and the public good of the community. The price of provisions becomes much more unreasonable; our fishery is neglected; and no one benefit arises, but that of putting money into the pockets of physicians and lawyers, which they never fail to do, who with constant fulness are sick in their bodies and quarrelsome in their tempers. The calendar of the church of England, which is moderate enough in its restrictions, would be of infinite service to us, if it were duly observed. I once met with a wife and good man, far advanced in years, and of an infirm constitution, who assured me he neither used nor wanted any other physician. If we were to adopt his rule, nature would have that seasonable relief which is necessary; our health and our spirits would be better; suicide, a growing and tremendous evil, would be less frequent; our fishery would have better encouragement, a matter of no small weight to a maritime people, whose navigation is  
their



their natural defence ; provisions would be cheaper ; the nation in general would be wiser ; and perhaps we should also have a better claim to the blessing of Heaven, if we shewed a more pious regard to the wholesome regulations of the Christian church ; which are now so shockingly neglected, that our feasts and merry-meetings are on Wednesdays and Fridays (perhaps on Good-Friday itself), when our forefathers of the Reformation, who kept up to what they professed, were praying and fasting.

The time hath come upon many great nations, when ill principles and self-indulgence, and that infatuation which is the natural consequence of both, have brought them to ruin ; and in all appearance that time is now coming upon us. I am persuaded we have sunk more hastily into universal corruption, from the sanctified fastings of our Puritans in the days of Cromwell ; whose rapine and violence, when compared with their affected mortifications, brought a scandal upon all the forms and appearances of religion. Yet such has been our destiny, that while we have dropped the most religious of their practices, we have taken up with the worst of their principles, and are now suffering under the natural effects of them.

## L E T T E R IV.

*On Diversions.*

**I**T is laid down as a principle of action by most young people of fortune, that there is no enjoyment of life without diversion: and this is now carried to such excess, that pleasure seems to be the great object which has taken place of every other. The mistake is very unhappy, as I intend to shew by taking the other side of the question, and proving that there is no enjoyment of life without work.

The words commonly used to signify play, are these four; relaxation, diversion, amusement, and recreation. The idea of relaxation is taken from a bow, which must be unbent when it is not wanted, to keep up its spring. Diversion signifies a turning aside from the main purpose of a journey, to see something that is curious and out of the way. Amusement means an occasional forsaking of the Muses, when a student lays aside his books. Recreation is the refreshing of the spirits when they are exhausted with labour, so that they may be  
ready

ready in due time to resume it again. From these considerations it follows, that the idle man, who has no work, can have no play; for how can he be relaxed who is never bent? how can he turn out of the road, who is never in it? how can he leave the Muses who is never with them? how can play refresh him who is never exhausted with business?

When diversion becomes the business of life, its nature is changed. All rest presupposes labour; and the bed is refreshing to a weary man; but when a man is confined to his bed, he is miserable, and wishes himself out of it. He that has no variety can have no enjoyment; he is surfeited with pleasure, and, in the better hours of reflexion, would find a refuge in labour itself. And, indeed, I apprehend there is not a more miserable, as well as a more worthless being, than a young man of fortune who has nothing to do but to find some new way of doing nothing. A sentence is passed upon all poor men, that if they do not work they shall not eat; and it takes effect, in part, against the rich, who, if they are not useful in some respect to the public, are pretty sure to become burthen some to themselves. This blessing

goes along with every useful employment, it keeps a man upon good terms with himself, and consequently in good spirits, and in a capacity of pleasing, and being pleased with every innocent gratification. As labour is necessary to procure an appetite to the body, there must also be some previous exercise of the mind to prepare it for enjoyment; indulgence on any other terms is false in itself, and ruinous in its consequences; mirth degenerates into senseless riot, and gratification soon terminates in corruption.

If we compare the different lots of mankind, we shall find that happiness is much more equally distributed than we are apt to think when we judge by outward appearance. The industrious poor have, in many respects, more enjoyment of life, than the idler sort of gentry, who, by their abuse of liberty and wealth, fall into temptations and snares; and in the immoderate pursuit of imaginary pleasures, find nothing in the end but real bitterness. The remedy of all is in this short sentence, "to be useful is to be happy." If Eugenio had followed the profession for which his father intended him, he might now have been alive, and a happy member of society: but his father dying when he was young, he used his  
liberty



liberty (as he called it) and threw himself upon the world as a man of leifure with a small fortune. His idleness exposed him to bad company, who were idle like himself; they led him into extravagance; extravagance led him to gambling, as a last resort for the repairing of his fortune; but it had a contrary effect, and completed his ruin: his disappointments made him quarrelsome, and a quarrel brought on a duel, in which he lost his life at five-and-twenty. In this short account of Eugenio you have the history of many young men of this age, who are bewitched with the ideas of liberty and pleasure; but with this difference, that some are destroyed by others, and some destroy themselves.

The progress is much the same with a nation as with an individual; when they rise from poverty, activity, and industry, to improvement, ease, and elegance, they sink into indolence and luxury, which bring on a fever and a delirium, till having quarrelled among themselves, and turned their swords against one another, they fall by a sort of political suicide, or become a prey to some foreign enemy.

## L E T T E R V.

*On Novels.*

**W**HEN you read for amusement, let your mind be turned as much as possible to the real transactions of human life, as they are represented and commented upon by wise and faithful historians; and beware of throwing away your time, as too many now do, by giving yourself up to trifling works of imagination, of which there is a deluge in the present age, to the subversion of common sense, and the general corruption of our principles and morals.

While I was in the shop of a sensible bookseller in the country, a young man presented himself, who came for some volumes of a novel. As soon as he had turned his back, " Sir, (said the bookseller) our trade is now in a manner reduced to this one article of letting out novels : that young man has read half the novels in my collection; and when he has finished his studies, by  
reading

reading the other half, the ignorance he brought into my shop would have done him more good than the knowledge he will carry out of it." Many other occurrences have led me to reflect on this fashion, which has increased so much of late years, as nearly to swallow up all other reading; like the lean kine of Pharaoh, which swallowed up all the fat ones, and did not look the better for it.

Consider, therefore, before your judgment is corrupted, that most novels are exceedingly lean in their matter, to say the best of them. Many of them are the cold productions of people who write for the fashion (with as much indifference as milliners make caps), without any materials worth communicating. Others are the offspring of a rambling fancy, which puts together a string of incidents, not one degree above the tea-table, and of no more real concern than if they were to hold you by the ears, as some tiresome people do, with an account of their dreams; indeed many of them are but the waking dreams of those who know neither the world nor themselves. Many of them also are mean imitations, which affect the style and manner of more successful compositions. Some of them are void of  
all

all regular design, and made up of heterogeneous parts, which have no dependence upon one another.

———*latè qui splendeat unus et alter*

*Affuitur pannus*———

And thus they become like the party-coloured jacket of a fool upon the stage of a mountebank, who sets the rabble a-gape with the low and insipid wonders he has collected, to detain them in his company, and draw the money out of their pockets.

It were well if the reading of novels were nothing worse than the loss of time and money, tho' this is bad enough; but young people will not escape so; it has generally a bad effect upon the mind, and, in some instances, a fatal effect upon the morals and fortune. In novels, plays, and romances (for they have all the same general object, which is *amusement*) good and evil are disguised by false colourings and unjust representations. The end is, *to please*: and how is this end to be obtained? Nothing will please loose people but intrigues and loose adventures: nothing will please the unlettered profligate but blasphemous sneers upon religion and the holy scriptures: nothing will  
please



please the vicious but the palliation of vice and the contempt of virtue : therefore, novelists and comic writers who study popularity, either for praise or profit, mix up vice with amiable qualities, to cover and recommend it, while virtue is compounded with such ingredients as have a natural tendency to make it odious. These tricks are put upon the public every day, and they take those for their benefactors who thus impose upon them.

But novels vitiate the taste while they corrupt the manners : through a desire of captivating the imagination, they fly above nature and reality ; their characters are all overcharged, and their incidents boil over with improbabilities and absurdities. The imagination, thus fed with wind and flatulence, loses its relish for truth, and can bear nothing that is ordinary : so that the reading of novels is to the mind what dram-drinking is to the body ; the palate is vitiated, the stomach is squeamish, the juices are corrupted, the digestion is spoiled, and life can be kept up only by that which is supernatural and violent. The gamester who accustoms himself to violent agitations, can find no pleasure unless his passions are all kept upon the stretch, like the  
rigging

rigging of a ship in a storm; his amusement is in racks, tortures, and even madness itself: and such is the taste of those who habituate their imaginations to the flights and extravagancies of modern romances.

It is a certain proof that a nation is become degenerate in sense, in learning, in œconomy, in morals, and in religion, when they are running thus after shadows, and neglecting all that is useful and valuable in life. The polite author of the *Travels of Cyrus*, describing the state of the Medes when their empire was declining, gives a lively picture of that literary corruption which is the never-failing attendant upon luxury and a dissolution of morals:

“Solid knowlege was looked upon as contrary to  
 “delicacy of manners; agreeable trifling, fine-spun  
 “thoughts, and lively fallies of imagination, were  
 “the only kinds of wit admired there: no sort of  
 “writing pleased but amusing fictions; where a  
 “perpetual succession of events surpris’d by their  
 “variety, without improving the understanding, or  
 “ennobling the heart.”

I have sometimes been struck with the reflexion, that few writers, who forge a series of events, look  
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upon their attempt in a serious light, and consider the hazard of the undertaking; how they are in continual danger of giving us false notions of the consequences of human actions, and of misrepresenting the ways of Divine Providence; for the ways of men, so far as they are passive under the consequences of their own actions, are the ways of God. When we confine ourselves to real life, and are content with describing facts, with the consequences that actually followed them, we may be unable to trace the designs of Providence, but then we do not misrepresent them; and the time will come when God will be justified in all those complicated events, which we are unable now to reconcile with the known laws of justice and goodness. But when we dare to settle the fate of imaginary characters, we take the providence of God out of his hands, assuming an office for which no man is fit, and in which he cannot miscarry without some danger to himself and others: for example; a writer may even mean well, and yet thro' short-sightedness and mistake, may bring virtue into distress under such circumstances as Providence, perhaps, never did or will, and thereby may bring

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discouragements upon virtue, and even throw it into despair; he may give to vice that success which it never had, or will have, so long as God governs the world.

To counterbalance this danger, Lord Bacon observes, that, "in works of imagination there is liberty of representing virtue and vice in their proper colours, with their proper rewards, and to correct, as it were, the common course of things, and satisfy the principles of justice, by which the mind of a reader is influenced." In this respect, works of genius have an advantage above real history, and may be admitted, provided the writer himself is of sound judgment, and influenced by principles of truth and justice.

If, when you have weighed these things together, you should suspect that I have been too nice and severe, consider that it is better to err on the side of caution and prudence; and that I may say for myself what the apostle said upon a like occasion, *I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.*

Upon the whole, life is a serious thing, and all events are at God's disposal; and as the good and evil of this world, transient and momentary as it is,  
stands



stands connected with the good and evil of the next, which is perpetual, it is dangerous to trifle with it, as they are tempted to do, who address themselves only to the passions of men, without having any principles of truth and justice to restrain them. I do not say, that you should abstain from all fiction, as such, for there is much profitable fiction. I could name several things which you may read in this way with safety and improvement: *Gil Blas* is a romance of the first class, in excellent French, distinguished by many capital strokes of good sense and original wit; the narrative of *Rolando*, the captain of the robbers, when we consider the character and profession of the person who delivers it, is one of the highest-wrought satires upon the follies of parental indulgence in education that is any where to be met with. I mean therefore to give you warning, that as fiction is now managed in plays and novels, it is proper to be upon your guard against it. And let me caution you against all such productions of wit as make too free with religion, even with the errors of it; the mind by sporting with great subjects, will be accustomed to make dishonourable associations, and  
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to lose much of that veneration which is due to things of eternal moment. I question whether any man can read *Swift's Tale of a Tub*, or *Don Quixote's Visions*, without finding himself the worse for it. In regard to all such indiscreet applications of wit, every young student may guard his mind and rectify his judgment, by reading Mr. Collier's *View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*; a book which brought Dryden himself to repentance, and does indeed beggar every work upon the same argument; it is the triumph of wit over scurrility; of piety over profaneness; of learning over ignorance; and of christianity over atheism.

There is a practice common with our fabulists, moralists, and romance writers, which is contrary to fact and nature, and therefore is absurd in itself, while it is disrespectful and injurious to true religion, though it wonderfully captivates the fancy of some people, who admire what is exotic, without considering whether it is reasonable; our writers have a favourite practice of recommending wisdom and morality, and many admirable virtues, to christian readers, in a *Turkish dress*; but is it not dishonest to give to the koran the honour of those  
fenti-

sentiments, and that illumination, which the author himself derived from an higher source ? It ought to raise our indignation to see the imagery, eloquence, and purity of the scripture, giving dignity to the antichristian spirit of Mahometan infidels. This is an offence of the same kind with what some learned critics have supposed to have been prohibited under the terms of the third commandment, " thou shalt " not apply the name of God to a vanity, that is, to " an heathen idol." And it seems not much less injurious, to take the pure and exalted doctrines of the Christian philosophy, and put them into the mouths of narrow-minded, barbarous, bigotted, malicious, illiterate Musulmen, by supposing them to talk and moralize in the superior strain of a well-informed Christian; and to invigorate their speech with the powers of learning, like classical scholars who have studied oratory and elegance all their lives; though the Turk is a professed enemy to literature. This plan exposes us to another inconvenience; that if we speak in character, we must speak with veneration of the religion of Mahomet, and call it *our most holy faith*; and the impostor who invented it must be, *our holy prophet*; which though it is but fiction, yet such is the weakness of the human mind,

and the force of custom, that we may tell lies, or hear them told, till we believe them; and speak respectfully of Mahomet, till we think but meanly of the Gospel. The Adventurer has great merit as a work of moral instruction and entertainment, and may be read with great advantage by young persons who would be aware of the ways of the world, and the snares that are laid to ruin innocence: in many respects the Adventurer is superior to the Spectator, and the author seems to have written with an excellent intention: but he has too frequently indulged that idle humour of laying his scenes upon Turkish ground, and conveying his precepts in Turkish attire.

The lives of men famous in their generation, as saints, martyrs, scholars, philosophers, soldiers; and of those also who were singularly infamous, as impostors, thieves, murderers, tyrants, usurpers, &c. if faithfully represented, will instruct while they entertain, and exhibit good and evil in their true colours, to much better effect than the thin-spun, long-winded letters of Richardson, the incoherent ramblings of Sterne, or the low scenes of Smollett, &c. which leave behind them but little worth retaining.

LET-



## L E T T E R VI.

*On the Use of Mathematical Learning.*

A Young member of the university of Oxford being directed by his tutor to the study of Euclid's Elements with the rest of his class, remonstrated against it to his companions as a useless undertaking: "What," said he, "does the man think " my father intends me for a carpenter?" Many other scholars of more wit than experience are under the same mistake: they think the mathematical sciences are of no benefit, but to those who are to make either a practical or a professional use of them. It must be owned, that their application to the business of life is chiefly in mechanics, astronomy, navigation, perspective, the military arts of fortifying and attacking of places, surveying of land, and the like. And where would be the harm, if a gentleman of fortune, who has leisure to know every thing, should know some of these things? But the use of mathematical learning is by

no means confined to practical arts and necessary computations: it is eminently serviceable to improve and strengthen the intellectual faculties, and render them more fit for every kind of speculation. Geometry is a sort of logic, wherein quantities are the objects of argumentation: and the method of arguing is so strict, that the order of a demonstration cannot be followed without that unremitting attention, which, when it once becomes habitual to the mind, will be transferred to all other subjects. The memory will be better able on every occasion to assist the judgment in comparing what went before with what comes after, and thence deducing a conclusion with precision. Logic teaches the art of deducing some third proposition from the comparison of two others in a syllogism: but a geometrical demonstration being frequently a series of such syllogisms, habituates the understanding to a more orderly arrangement of complicated ideas; for if the order is broken the proof is deficient. Method is of the first importance in all subjects, to give a discourse the two excellencies of force and perspicuity; and no practice is so proper to communicate this art of methodizing as the forms of reasoning in geometry. We have a remarkable instance of the efficacy

efficacy of this practice in the theological writings of Dr. Barrow, to whose skill in geometry it may be imputed in great measure, that he has divided and disposed his subjects with so much art and judgment, as to exhaust their matter, and render them intelligible in every part.

But even to omit this analogical use of geometry, the science is necessary in itself to give an understanding of many things, which ought to be known by men of a liberal education. Geography can be understood but very imperfectly without it: and the arts of projection, which teach us how to represent the face of the world in perspective, are as entertaining as they are useful. Every curious mind must be delighted with the operations of trigonometry; which enables us to measure with certainty such quantities and distances as are inaccessible: which to an ignorant person seems impossible, as if there were some magic in the work: but it is the general object of all mathematical reasoning, from known quantities to find others that are unknown, by means of certain relations subsisting between them.

There is scarcely any thing in nature more wonderful to a contemplative person, and more worthy

to be studied, than the effect of certain proportions in the theory of music, which can never be examined and understood without some knowledge of the doctrine concerning the composition and resolution of ratios, a curious and useful branch of the mathematics. Pythagoras was so captivated with the mathematical sections of a musical string, and their practical application to some other arts, that he is reported to have exhorted his disciples, as he lay upon his death-bed, to study the monochord. And all this, as a matter of contemplation, for the improvement and enlargement of the mind, is worth the attention of a scholar, though he never intends to strike a note of music all the days of his life. How ignorant, and even barbarous, would it be in a gentleman of education to remonstrate, that all this is nothing to him, because his father did not intend him for a fiddler!

In philosophy, especially under the present state of it, the use of mathematical learning is unquestionable. What gentleman of taste would not envy Sir George Shuckburgh for his late learned labours upon the Alps, where he had the opportunity of trying so many curious experiments, by an application of the present theory of that useful instrument

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the barometer, as improved by Mr. De Luc? but no gentleman can be qualified to amuse himself and serve the public in that way, without some considerable skill in calculation, the experiments being very intricate, and abounding with niceties which must be accurately understood and attended to.

A course of the most ingeniously contrived experiments on the velocity of projectiles, and the resistance of the air to bodies moving swiftly in it, were invented by the late Mr. Robins the engineer, which for their elegance are by no means beneath the admiration of a scholar; who will never repent of the labour necessary for understanding them. They have been farther carried on very lately from small arms to ordnance by Dr. Hutton, a member of the Royal Society. Whatever the value of these experiments may be in themselves (and they are chiefly valuable to military artists) they have had at least one good effect, in which all men of literature have an interest; they have given occasion to a discourse from the late worthy president Sir John Pringle, which for its learning, curiosity, elegance of style, and propriety of oratory, must be admired by all judges as a pattern in that kind of writing.

Now I have carried you thus far into the uses of mathematical learning, let me warn you against the danger we are under from the abuses of it. Mankind are very ingenious in using things; and they are almost as ingenious in abusing them. That great and good man Bishop Berkeley brought a heavy charge against the mathematicians of his age; first, because they deviated wantonly, and with some perplexity and apparent contradiction, into a boundless field of useless subtilities. And secondly, because many of them were found to be ill affected to the greatest subjects of religion, which are infinitely more important in human life. It has been said that he carried the matter too far, and laid himself open to the criticisms of his adversaries: but he had too much learning and too much acuteness to make himself ridiculous in the management of any argument. There was some foundation of truth in what he advanced: for if the mind is not upon its guard, a mathematician is disposed to look for that sort of sensible demonstration in other subjects, which is to be found only when we reason about quantities; and therefore he rejects much truth with a high hand, as if it were deficient in point of evidence: which is unreasonable and absurd.

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I am as perfectly convinced, that there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, and that he was murdered in the Capitol at Rome, as I am that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones: but I am not convinced upon the same kind of evidence: I cannot prove it by lines and angles. What then? I can no more doubt of the one than of the other: but I believe the one on visible descriptive evidence, depending upon certain axioms, or undeniable truths relating to quantities: and I believe the other on undeniable testimony, and the coins subsisting every where at this day, which bear his image and superscription, as also by his writings, which no man living was able to forge. I must therefore believe that there really was such a person, or I could soon shew you, that I must believe something more incredible; and that would be just as irrational as to deny a geometrical proposition with its own proper evidence.

The ingenious Mr. Robins above mentioned, who as a mathematician, a dextrous experimentalist, and a writer of a clear and classical style, was equal to most men living, was so unaccountably wild in his reasonings on some other subjects, that I have been told, he held the doctrine of future punishment to  
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be a fable, because he could not see a *soul burned at Charing-cross*: as if the scripture could not be true, because it is not a book of geometry; or there could be no future state, because we cannot prove it by an air pump. De Moivre, another eminent mathematician, who left France as a protestant refugee, is said to have derided himself afterwards for leaving his country to preserve his religion, which he lost past recovery when he had been some time in England. I had occasion once to enquire after a great proficient in mathematical learning, whose works I had seen while I had no knowledge of his person. My bookseller at London, of whom I enquired, gave me a particular account of him; adding to the rest, that he was a *true mathematician*, for he was a *great reprobate, and every word he spoke was attended with an oath*. I mention this, to shew, that a notion had gone abroad, whether justly or not, that the generality of mathematicians are disposed, as such, to irreligion and profaneness. Two reasons may be given for this, supposing it to be true. The mathematics are open to students who have not had the advantages of a liberal education, and want the assistance of collateral learning to open their minds, and keep them within the bounds of truth and modesty.

And



And as the fashion of the last and present age, with the fame so justly attributed to our great Newton, have placed the mathematical sciences so much higher than they used to be in the scale of literature, students who excel in them are under a temptation, incident to us all, to over-rate themselves and their knowledge. Thus they fall into vanity, pedantry, narrow-mindedness, and scepticism; neglecting and even despising all other learning, which is equally, and, in some respects more valuable, for improving the heart and rectifying the judgment: ignorant of things, with which they are most intimately concerned; and placing all their pride in a sort of learning, to the exercise of which perhaps, they will never be called, when they come forth into the business of life. One thing I would whisper in the ear of scepticism before I quit the present subject, which is this; that the more a man knows, the farther he sees into truth: as he sees farther into truth, the objects of his belief will be continually increasing: and therefore *Doubting*, as such, is not a sign of wisdom: as he advances in knowledge, he will find by experience that he doubted from ignorance.

LET-

## L E T T E R VII.

*On Reading and Pronunciation.*

**Y**OU are sensible we have taken some pains, and with good reason, in the practice of reading with propriety. It is a matter of the last importance in education, though too generally neglected: in public schools it is seldom thought of. Several years are spent in charging the memory with words, while few days are employed in forming the voice and judgment to utter them in a powerful and agreeable manner.

A scholar may be such in theory, when his head is stored with languages, and he can interpret the writings of the Greeks and Romans; but he is no scholar in practice till he can express his own sentiments in a good style, and speak them in a proper manner. A mathematician understands the rationale of musical sounds; but the musician, who charms the ear, and touches the passions, is he who can combine sounds agreeably, according to the rules

rules of art in composition, and perform them well upon an instrument: the dead philosophy of music in the head of a mathematician, is like the learning of a Greek and Latin scholar, who can neither write nor read; and there are many such to be found.

There are two great faults in reading which people fall into naturally; and there is another fault which is the work of art, as bad, in my opinion, as either of the former: it is common with those who are untaught, or ill taught, or have a bad ear, to read in a lifeless insipid tone, without any of those artificial turnings of the voice which give force and grace to what is delivered. When a boy takes a book into his hand he quits his natural speech, and either falls into a whining canting tone, or assumes a stiff and formal manner, which has neither life nor meaning. Observe the same boy when he is at play with his companions, disputing, reasoning, accusing, or applauding, and you will hear him utter all his words with the flexures which are proper to the occasion, as nature and passion, and the matter dictates. Why does he not read as forcibly as he speaks? This he would soon do, if he were to consider, that reading is but another sort of talking. He that reads, talks out of a  
book;

book ; and he that talks, reads without book ; this is all the difference : therefore let a boy consider with himself, how he would talk what he is reading, and then he will drop the formal tone he had assumed, and pronounce easily and naturally.

The sense of a passage depends so much on the emphasis with which it is uttered, that if you read without emphasis the matter is dead and uninteresting : if you lay it on the wrong word, you alter the sense. Examples may be given of sentences which have as many meanings as words when the emphasis is differently placed. Thus, if the question were asked, *Do you ride to London to-day ?* Place the accent on the first word, the sense is, *Do you ? Or do you not ?* If you place it on the second, it means, *Do you go yourself ; or does somebody else go for you ?* Lay it on the third, it means, *Do you go on horseback, or on foot, &c. ?* On the fourth, it asks, whether you go *so far as London, or only part of the way ?* On the fifth, it is, *do you ride to London, or to some other place ?* If you lay it on the two last, it asks, whether you go there *to-day, or at some other time ?*

This trite example is sufficient to shew, that you must understand the meaning of a sentence before you can pronounce it right ; and that if you pronounce

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nounce it wrong, the meaning cannot be understood by another person. To hear any one reading in a single unvaried note or monotone, without expressing the sense, is like looking upon a right line which has no variety of flexure to entertain the eye: and if he reads with a false emphasis, he makes the sense absurd and ridiculous. Many instances have been reported to illustrate this absurdity. They tell us of a reader, who in delivering that passage of scripture from the reading desk, "he said unto them, saddle the as, and they saddled him," unfortunately laid the accent on the last word; by which the sentence was made to signify, that the man was saddled instead of his beast.

The want of art and skill, especially in a matter where it is of real consequence, is unpardonable in a person of a liberal education: but it is equally offensive to read with too much art. *Nequid nimis*, is to be observed here as in other cases. Affectation is disgusting wherever it is to be found; it betrays a want of judgment in the speaker, and none ever admire it but the illiterate, who are not prepared to make proper distinctions. We are never  
more

more justly offended, than when an attempt is made to surprise us with unreasonable rant, with grimace and distortion, and such other emotions as are not justified by the matter delivered, and destroy the effect of it with those who have judgment to see through the artifice. When a speaker seems to expect that I should be surprised, and I am not; when he shews me, that he is endeavouring to lead my passions where they cannot follow, it occasions a very disagreeable sensation. Affectation, though it is always out of place, and seldom fails to defeat its own intentions, is never more so than when it appears in the pulpit or the reading desk; where it is shocking to see the airs of the theatre, and to hear a preacher enforcing his observations with the voice of an actress expiring upon the stage.

What is unnatural cannot be just; and nothing can be affecting which is not natural. Therefore, in all reading, we must have regard to the sense, to the matter, and the occasion: then we shall read with propriety, and what we deliver will have the proper effect.

One rule ought never to be forgotten; that the reader or speaker should seem to feel in himself what he delivers to others; *si vis me flere dolendum est ipse tibi*. The principle is certain, and even mechanical; for in all machines, no part moves another without being first moved itself. This is the soul of all elocution, with which a common beggar at a door has the powers of an orator, and without which, all the rules of art are cold and insignificant. A barrel-organ can be made to play a most elaborate piece of music truly and correctly; but the sounds want that animation which they receive from the finger of a living player, who is himself delighted with what he is performing.

For practice in reading, a plain narrative has not variety enough to exercise the different turns of the voice: speeches, reasonings, controversies, and dialogues are more proper; and there is great choice in the scriptures. The speeches of St. Paul to Agrippa, Festus, and the Jews; his reasonings in the Epistle to the Romans; the conversation of the Jews with the man that was born blind; are all excellent to teach propriety and force of expression. Some of the Night-thoughts of Dr. Young are so

difficult, that they cannot be expressed without some study and a perfect understanding of the sense; but when understood, they will contribute much to farther improvement. I am cautious of recommending speeches in plays; not only because the matter is too often corrupting, but because there is danger of falling from thence into an affected over-strained manner, which is always to be avoided.

The prose pieces of Swift are so correct and humorous, and are stored with such variety of speech, reasoning, and dialogue, that they cannot be read without advantage; and therefore I would recommend them to your perusal for this purpose. In a future letter I shall give you some advice about style and composition.



## L E T T E R VIII.

### *On Style.*

**B**Y a style in writing we mean that language in which an author expresses the matter he is writing upon; and a good style is constituted by proper words in proper places.

A complete sentence is called a period; which consists of several members or clauses, and those members are composed of single words. Short periods are fit for light and familiar compositions, as epistles and dialogues. Long periods are proper to more grave and stately discourses, as set speeches, historical narrations, and moral or theological essays. It is a great point of art, and requires much experience, to accommodate the length and form of a period to the matter treated of, or the particular passion to which the writer addresses himself. These are niceties which I shall not dwell upon, as belonging more properly to the

figures of rhetoric; but give you, instead of them, this general rule, that no period ought to be so long, or so complicated, as to be obscure; for darkness in language, like the darkness of the night, takes away the sight of all objects, so that they are without effect, however great and excellent they may be in themselves. To avoid this evil, be sure that you understand the connexion of what you say, and forbear to embarrass your sentences with frequent and impertinent parentheses, which happen only because your ideas are not regularly disposed in your mind when you commit them to paper. You must also be clear in the grammar of your expressions, for false grammar defiles a sentence, and admits of no apology. The best word you can use to denote any thing, is that word which is applied to it in the common conversation of those who speak correctly in their own language. If there is a native English word for your purpose, always use it in preference to one of Greek or Roman extraction. You cannot imagine how the sense of any discourse is weakened by superfluous words, unnecessary epithets, and far-fetched expressions. Nothing but pedantry and affectation  
can

can tempt you to use *debility* instead of weakness; *stolidity* for foolishness; or *paerility* for childishness; unless perhaps, on some occasions, when we are driven to a variety of terms to avoid the poverty of repetition. A curious choice of fine words, for the embellishment of our diction upon a common subject, is as disgusting as an affected theatrical air in pronunciation, and is analogous to a foppishness of appearance in our persons: the fop shews you, that he means to be more than a gentleman, and the affected writer would be something more than a scholar. I cannot help being pleased and edified with Mr. Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs, where the attention is kept up by the disposition of the scenery, and the choice of the matter, which is forcibly and pathetically expressed; but I find myself often hurt by the introduction of some fine word where a plain one would have done better, and would have been more proper to the solemnity of the occasion. In some other of his Meditations, where the matter is not so striking, and more thinly spread, the pedantry is unpardonable, and the affectation altogether surfeiting, though his manner is greatly admired by persons of little judgment.

If the mind is sincere, it cannot be hunting for curious terms while it is impressed with deep sentiments, which will never fail to bring their own words with them. When the mind is at the same time greatly and impertinently employed, it will be under the like suspicion with an actress upon the stage, who is seen to be solicitous about the plaits of her clothes, while she is uttering sentiments of horror and despair.

Let me also caution you against pedantic innovations in your *spelling*, which some writers are attempting to introduce amongst us. There are instances where a reformation in this respect may be reasonable and proper; but I have seen many improvements which are improper and absurd, because our derivatives have come down to us from the Latin through the medium of the French, and cannot be reduced to the Latin itself without violence. If the principle should be admitted, whither will it carry us? If you write *florish* instead of *flourish*, because it comes from *floro*, then you ought also to write *flore*, instead of *flower*, because it comes from *flor*, which has no *w* in it.

A style



A style easy, pleasant, correct, and properly adorned, is of great value, because it gives life and beauty to every subject it sets forth. It is like the rich and improved soil of a garden, which adds to the size and form of every vegetable planted in it. How much less interesting are the actions of Cæsar, when Hirtius has the telling of them: but in his own style there is magic.

When a writer has a bad design, and would recommend to us any false and dangerous opinions, a good style has a very bad effect; as the soil of a garden, which improves wholesome vegetables, gives strength and magnitude to weeds. Men of ill principles know this; and are therefore very attentive and curious to please a reader's eye with elegance of expression and propriety of language. A devil undressed would be but little able to make his way in this world.

To form an English style, you must be conversant with the best English writers; you must not only read them, but converse with them, and live with them; weighing their expressions and imbibing their phraseology into your constitution; for which purpose you will do well if you extract

what is most worthy of observation, and place it in a collection, that it may remain with you.

The authors I would recommend for this purpose are Bacon, (Lord Verulam,) Swift, South, Sprat, Addison, Roger North, and Dr. Middleton. Lord Bacon excels in richness of metaphor, and majesty of diction; as you will soon discover, if you read attentively his *Advancement of Learning*, a piece which every English scholar should almost know by heart: but as the English language has received many alterations since Bacon's time, some of his phrases are now too formal and obsolete. Swift has such vigour, clearness and plainness in his style as will never be exceeded; and his writing may be taken as the standard of the English language. South has strength and ornament; and, exclusive of the goodness of his matter, is one of the finest declaimers in the world. Sprat, in his *History of the Royal Society*, is free and elegant to the highest degree, but rather too florid. When it is seen that the style is overmuch refined, we think a writer has a design upon us, and take offence at it. Dr. North Master of Trinity College in Cambridge, next after Barrow, and Greek professor, was so captivated with Sprat's *History*, that

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he said he would be content to read no other book for a whole year, if he might acquire by it the style of that writer\*.

Roger North is excellent at a narrative: his language is animated, forcible and humorous; but he is apt to transgress by introducing exotic words and expressions. Middleton in his English is a pattern of classical art and elegance. The colouring of honest writers may be compared to the beauties of a flower; but Middleton's ornaments are the colours of a snake: and therefore no young man should venture to improve himself from such an author, till he is settled in his principles, and can distinguish with safety between the manner and the matter, the art and the artificer.

Dryden never wrote much prose; but what he did write is capital in its kind: it is nervous in the sense, and highly adorned in the periods.

There is another excellent English writer but little known, Dr. Young the father of the poet, who, in his two volumes of Sermons, discovers such strength

\* Life of Sir Dudley and Dr. John North, by Roger North, Esq. Page 263.

and propriety of expression, with such chaste and genuine ornaments of style, that he must charm and improve every judicious reader; for his materials are as excellent as the workmanship.

Anson's Voyage is a fine correct narrative, and a pattern in that sort of writing: I think it the nearest of any work we have in English to Cæsar's Commentaries. In some of the prose pieces of Dr. Johnson, especially his latter political pamphlets, you will find all the beauties of style and expression: of which, notwithstanding some very pardonable singularities, we must allow him to be a great master: and you may depend on him also as a friend to truth and virtue. His Lives of some of our English Poets, lately published, are inimitably written; and while they give you an example of style and composition, they will place before you, in a striking point of view, the inconsistency which is often found in the human character. They will shew you, how the powers of wit and profligacy of morals, manly literature and childish improvidence, elegance of speech and roughness of manners, strength of imagination and absurdity of principle, are tempered together in some of the sons of Parnassus;



nassus; whence you will infer, that virtue is preferable to genius, and that integrity without learning is better than learning without sobriety.

Our pleaders at the bar, and people of the law, having great practice in the English language, become well acquainted with the powers of it, and many of them have excelled as patterns of English eloquence; of which many great examples occur in the charges which are to be found in the State Trials.

Since the time when I attempted to improve my English, (which I brought very bad from the University) some new writers have risen into fame, such as Hume, and others, who are to be regarded in literature as thieves and assassins in society, and are therefore to be read with caution, as Middleton their kinsman. When truth and elegance meet together, we are safe as well as happy; but it is a dangerous employment, and scarcely worth the experiment, to gather flowers upon rotten ground, where there is a dirty bottom, which threatens to swallow us up.

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## L E T T E R IX.

*On the Idioms of Language.*

**E**VERY language has its own proper forms of expression, called *idioms*, which mean proprieties or peculiarities. If, when you speak or write in one language, you make use of the idiom proper to another, you are guilty of what is called a *barbarism*. The term is commonly applied to offences against the classical modes of speech, established by the authority of the best writers among the Latins or the Greeks. The Greeks and Romans accounted all nations barbarians but themselves; therefore to speak barbarous Latin is to speak in that language with the idiom peculiar to the language of some other nation. According to the idiom of the English language we use the phrase, *to get by heart*, which the Latins express by *mandare memoria*,

*memoria*, to commit to memory; and *recitare memoriter*, to repeat by memory: but if you were to speak in Latin as you do in English, and say *gignere corde*, you would be guilty of a gross barbarism. We should laugh at a Frenchman, who, speaking of one that came to an untimely end, should say, "he did not die his own proper death;" but in French *sa propre mort* is equivalent to what we call in English *a natural death*. How ridiculous it would sound to us in English, if a Frenchman, hearing one calling out with a loud voice, should say, "he cries with his head full;" but so they express themselves in their own language: *Crier a pleine tête*, is, to cry with as loud a voice as your head can bear; and *crier a tue tête*, is, to bawl so loud as to rend it. Languages differ very much in the use of the negative: in Latin and English two negatives make an affirmative; in Greek, French, and Italian, they are still negative; as *la scrittura non sapiente, ed insegna ogni cosa*, "writing knows nothing (*Ital.* does not know nothing), and yet teaches all things." It is very useful to compare the proverbial idioms of different languages. When we see how they have adopted different ideas to express the same sentiment,

ment, and come by so many different ways, some of them very wise and ingenious, to the same end, the prospects of the mind are greatly opened and enlarged. My meaning may be illustrated by a single instance; we say in English, *to pass the time away*; and gaming, or any other like diversion, is called *passime*: but in French they affix a moral idea to the same expression, and call it *tuer le tems*, to kill time, as if every vain and useless employment were a species of murder against that which is most valuable in this world, and dies a natural death much sooner than we could wish, and after all will certainly rise up against us in judgment.

We commonly use the word *barbarous* to denote the *cruel spirit* of uncivilized and savage nations; but the term originally belonged to confusion of speech, or the unintelligible language of a strange people; and it is so applied in the scriptures; *If I know not the meaning of the voice I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.* A barbarian, therefore, in the primitive sense of the word, is a person of a strange language: the term itself is derived from the word *Babel*, by a substitution, which is very frequent, of  
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one liquid consonant for another; and it is remarkable that the word *Babel*, as a monument of the confusion which happened there, has passed into all languages: the Greeks have it in their *βαβλῆς*, *βαβλῆς*, for *βαβλῆς*, to stammer; whence the Latin *barbarus*, *balbus*, and *balbutio*; the French *babiller*; the English *babble*, *babbler*, &c.

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## L E T T E R X.

*On the Use of History.*

**I**N a former letter I have mentioned *history* as an amusement; but here I mean to recommend it as a *science*. To persons of a private station, it is not so requisite: but to every gentleman, who may be called to an active and public life in the service of his country, it is absolutely necessary. The higher his rank, the more necessary is this science: if he is a prince, he is under greater obligation to study history than any of his subjects.

History shews us the laws of different countries, and the manners of different ages; the principles on which empires have risen to power and greatness, and the errors by which they have declined and fallen into decay. It teaches us the fatal effects of intestine divisions, whether arising from the mercenary views of self-interest and ambition, or from visionary ideas of liberty and false principles of policy. These things are worth the consideration of

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Englishmen at all times, especially at present. I am sorry to say it of our own countrymen, (who in the main are a sensible and generous people;) but, they are factious by nature, and are encouraged to opposition by their education. Those false ideas of liberty, government, and power, of which we are now reaping the fruits, have been unhappily propagated among them for many years past, and with as much assiduity as if the salvation of the people had depended upon them. From the doctrines of Algernon Sydney and Mr. Locke, which have so long been held in admiration, rebellion hath grown up as naturally as thorns and thistles spring from their proper seeds. We had reason to expect, that some learned person of abilities and good principles would have shewed us the fallacy of those doctrines: but they were exploded long ago by an able writer, whose work being unpopular at the time of its publication, when parties ran very high in this country, hath fallen into oblivion. History may in good measure dispel this charm, by teaching you, that there never was an instance of any government arising from *compact and the general consent of the people*, from whence our theorists suppose all governments to have been derived.

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rived. The idea is an absurdity; because kings, as the fathers of families, were prior to their subjects. All the great kingdoms of the earth either came by descent, or were gained by conquest; and he who gave the victory gave the kingdom. Mr. Selden was of opinion, that there is actually no power upon earth but the power of the sword. So I think; but then I must have leave to add, that this power of the sword belongs properly to him who created the iron of it; and that the sword held by government for the taking away of any man's life, is held by his commission; the reason of which is plain enough, if this were a place to insist upon it.

History will shew you the comparative inconveniencies of the different sorts of governments: that popular governments, especially the aristocratic, are the most expensive and tyrannical. That when liberty is rampant, and power gets into the hands of those, who by nature or law have no right to it, it must be bought out of them again, with the money of those who neither share the power nor partake of the plunder of their country. If you look at home, you will discover that the English government hath become more venal and expensive, in proportion as it hath approached nearer



nearer to the popular form, by encroachments upon the old legal rights of the crown, which as Lord Lyttelton has well observed in his History of Henry II. are the security of the people against the oppression of the nobility. The system of venality was established by Sir Robert Walpole, who openly professed that he had set a price upon every man's conscience, and turned all public business into a scramble.

When you read of wars, you will meet with examples of successful fore-sights, and fatal oversights; what opportunities have been lost for want of expedition and resolution: in particular, that no plots and rebellions were ever suppressed, but by unexpected and vigorous exertions in the beginning; and that no such exertions can well be made where the power is lodged in too many hands, and measures are consequently slow and fluctuating; what is still worse, the secrets of the state are bandied about so publicly in debate, that they are always known to the enemy, who have warning to direct their own motions, so as to defeat every design that is formed against them. Secrecy is the wisdom of power; and without it, all power is like a body without a soul.

You will see how the talents of great commanders have wrought wonders when occasion required. Such was the constructing of a wooden bridge over the Rhine by Julius Cæsar, for the passage of his troops into Germany. And such was the conduct of Xenophon, a scholar and a soldier like Julius Cæsar, when he led his Greeks safe back through a vast tract of the enemies country, after Cyrus, who had engaged them in his service, was defeated and slain. I have heard the following anecdote of Wolfe, who was a military genius as well as a man of courage; that he was shewing some general officers how expert his men were at a new mode of attacking and retreating upon hills; and when he stept up to one of the officers after the performance, and asked him what he thought of it. I think said he, I see something here of the History of the Carduchi, who harassed Xenophon, and hung upon his rear in his retreat over the mountains. You are right, said Wolfe; I had it from thence; and I see you are a man of reading; but our friends there are surpris'd at what I have shewn them, because they have *read nothing*.

You may learn how dangerous it is under any circumstances whatsoever to listen to the reports  
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of an enemy, from the fatal and very striking example of Cæsar's legion in Gaul, cut off by leaving their winter-quarters, at the perfidious remonstrances of Ambiorix.

When you read of the ancient Greeks and Romans, you will be animated with that noble spirit of defending their country, which then prevailed, without the mercenary motives which have taken the place of it in latter ages; when there are other ways for men to raise and enrich themselves without public merit.

Though modern history is necessary, on account of the changes which have been made in the art of war, you will find that the ancient discipline was better, and the lives and characters of soldiers more military than at present, when they who strove for the mastery were temperate in all things, and inured to every kind of hardship.

You will perhaps observe, that sieges cost more time, and blood, and treasure, while prosperous battles in the field win more country and cities, which commonly surrender to the conqueror. When a war is carried into an enemies country, it is maintained at their charge: the soldiers are obliged to

more vigilance and a stricter discipline: the aggressor is animated, and the invaded are discouraged.

From a multitude of similar instances, too numerous to be pointed out particularly, gentlemen by reading history may improve their minds, and acquire that experience of things which will fit them for advice and action when their country shall have need of their assistance: for courage without conduct, and industry without information, are of little value.

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## LETTER XI.

*On Taste.*

**W**HAT we call *Taste*, in the metaphorical sense of the word, is that faculty by which we distinguish beauty and excellence in the works of art; as the palate distinguishes what is pleasant in meat and drink. This latter faculty is natural; the former, so far as it signifies judgement, is the result of education and experience, and can be found only in a cultivated mind. Arts and sciences are so nearly related among themselves, that your judgement in one will always want some assistance from your knowledge of another: whence it comes to pass, that of people who pretend to taste, not one in twenty is really possessed of it. A spectator has heard others say, that such a figure in a certain picture is very fine; therefore he says so; and perhaps he is really struck with its beauties when they are pointed out: but in order to make the discovery for himself, it is necessary he should have some

acquaintance with the anatomy of the human figure, its due proportion, and the rules by which bodies are justly represented in perspective. If the figure is coloured, he should know what tints are natural to the skin, before he can pronounce whether they are true upon the canvass.

I had frequent opportunities of seeing from a particular instance how prone all ignorant persons are to prefer the worse to the better, and admire false excellence rather than true. In the seat of a certain nobleman, in the county where I was born, there is a very fine hall with two equestrian paintings in it nearly as large as life, one at each end of the room. Of these two, one is as graceful and highly finished as any picture of the sort in the kingdom: the other has little more merit than the figure of St. George upon a sign post; but having a gaudy appearance, with a very ill-judged glare of light in it, every vulgar eye is taken with it; while the exquisite beauties of its companion are neglected.

Hogarth, in his *Analysis of Beauty*, has laid down some of the best rules extant for enabling a person to distinguish elegance of drawing and propriety of design. His *Line of Beauty*, as he calls it, is a flowing line with contrary flexures, something like  
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the letter s, but not so much inflected, which takes place in the most elegant forms that nature presents to us; and will therefore communicate the like elegance to works of art, when it is judiciously introduced and applied. We trace it in the stream that winds through the vale, in the curvatures of hills, the foliage of flowers, the elevations and depressions of the muscles in the human figure, the graceful inclinations and attitudes of the body; and a thousand other instances. The remarks which Hogarth himself has made upon it in that work (as original as any of this age or country) are very just and striking; and they teach us, that beauty is not the creature of human fancy, as vulgarly supposed, but a real excellence, to be accounted for and demonstrated on actual principles of science. For farther instruction in this matter I must refer you to the book itself, which deserves not only to be read but studied.

But there is another source of beauty, which has little or no dependence upon that famous line: and yet, if it is considered, I think it will carry artists to some uncommon perfection in their works, and assist a spectator in judging better of what they have composed.

Harmony

Harmony in music has certain measures, which may be transferred with advantage to visible objects; and the eye will be delighted on the same principles with the ear; that is, by the like proportions and combinations. Though I propose this analogy, I would by no means be understood to make it an exclusive source of beauty: I am sensible there are others widely differing from it. I only mean to shew you, how it appears to me as one of the plainest and most universal rules we have to direct us in so critical a subject. What I have to say will be best understood by those who have some little knowledge of the theory of music, which I have endeavoured to explain to you on another occasion, so far as it is necessary to our present purpose. The *key-note* and its *third* and *fifth* constitute a perfect system of sound: with less than these the ear is not satisfied, and you cannot have more without repetition. I would hence infer, that every composition of a painter, which will admit of such a partition, should consist of three parts: and in good pictures, properly fancied, we shall generally find them. There is one principal object on one side; another to answer it on the other side; and a third betwixt them. "Simplicity," says Hogarth,



garth, " in the disposition of a great variety, is best  
 " accomplished by following nature's constant rule,  
 " of dividing composition into three or five parts  
 " or parcels—the painters accordingly divide theirs  
 " into fore-ground, middle-ground, and distance or  
 " back-ground: which simple and distinct quantities  
 " *mass* together that variety which entertains the  
 " eye; as the different parts of base, tenor, and  
 " treble, in a composition of music, entertain the  
 " ear \*."

Here you are to remember, that every musical ratio resolves itself into two, one of which is always greater than the other. The interval of a *fifth* does not consist of two equal *thirds*, but of a third *major* and a third *minor*: it seems, therefore, that a picture would want harmony, if the intermediate of three objects were exactly in the middle; where, by the way, a judicious painter never places it, but always inclining to one side. Suppose you have a moon-light piece; in which there is a groupe of shadowy objects (as trees) on one side, and another

\* Analogy of Beauty, page 112. I had ascribed this sentiment to Hogarth: but on farther examination I see it was published the year before his book came out, in an Essay on Musical Expression by Mr. Avison, page 26. where this analogy is much insisted upon.

to balance it on the other side, with the moon betwixt. If your two groupés are equal in size, and alike in figure, and your moon in the centre, the picture will be very stiff and ill-composed. Your groupés must, therefore, differ in size and figure, and project differently into the piece, and the moon must incline to one of the sides; and then the composition will have harmony. In the famous picture of general Wolfe, which every body knows, there are three groupés of figures, diversified and disposed with great judgment, and the principal object of the piece is not truly in the middle \*. This tripartite disposition is a principle of beauty, when we consider a piece laterally, that is, parallel to the

\* An ingenious Painter, who came to my house while I was transcribing this letter for the press, and heard me speaking of this subject, said the principle was not new to him, and that he was certain it had been advanced by some great master. The next day, he brought me the following observation by the translator of Fresnoy's Art of Painting. "Annibal Caracci did not believe that a picture could be good in which there were above twelve figures. It was Albano who told our author this, and from his mouth I had it. The reasons which he gave, were, first, that he believed there ought not be above THREE GROUPÉS of figures in any picture." See Fresnoy on Painting. page 101.

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horizontal line: and the same rule obtains when we consider a landscape in its *recession* from the eye. It is divided (as Hogarth has observed) into three distances, which are called, the *fore-ground*, the *middle-ground*, and the *off-skip*. The objects on the fore-ground are distinct in their lines, and strong in light and shade. Those on the middle-ground are somewhat fainter: and those in the back-ground partake of that blue colour which the intermediate air gives to all distant objects. But here again the measure should vary as before, because equality produces no harmony.

This tripartite disposition may be regarded at first as a source of beauty which is arbitrary and fanciful; but I have so often found myself struck with it, before I had considered it critically, that if I were to lay out an advantageous piece of ground, I would introduce it wherever I had an opportunity, and trust for the event to the taste of the spectator. If you have less than three objects presented to the eye, the composition is deficient and empty: if you have more, the sight is dissipated, and you must find some way of reducing, or, as Hogarth calls it, *massing* them. I suspect that the celebrated statue  
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of the Laocoon, however excellent in other respects, strikes every eye with more pleasure because it consists of three figures, all contributing to the same effect.

In the use of perspective regard should always be had to the rule of making unequal divisions. The centre of the object should never be in the centre of the piece. This is the case with the plans and elevations of builders, which have therefore no merit to the eye as pictures. There must be an obliquity in the lines, which produces harmony and variety; and hence a good painter never gives you the full face of a building, nor places a street or an avenue receding directly from the eye, and vanishing into the middle of the picture: all his measures run obliquely; and it will be found that his distribution is never so pleasing as when the sight has three principal points to rest upon.

If we make a transition to architecture, there the three dimensions of length, breadth, and height, which are common to all solid bodies, will never strike us so much with a sense of beauty as when they are accommodated to one another in some proportions deduced by analogy from the theory of music:



music: and such measures, whether they are applied in the external elevation, or the internal divisions, will have a pleasing effect, though the spectator is ignorant of the cause; for musical sounds please the ears of those who know nothing about their proportions. Thus, for example, if we would proportion the dimensions of a room in the best manner, let us take the measures from the harmonic divisions of a musical string, called a monochord; whatever note the whole string sounds, two-thirds of that whole (the tension remaining the same) will sound a fifth; three-fourths will sound a fourth; one half will sound an octave, or eighth. To apply these to our present purpose, let the length of a room be twenty-four feet, the breadth sixteen, and the height twelve; then will the breadth be to the length in the ratio of two to three, which is that of the diapente or fifth, a most perfect concord; the height will be to the breadth in the ratio of three to four, which is that of the diatessaron, or fourth; and to the length in the ratio of one to two, which is that of diapason, or the octave. Every person that has eyes will pronounce such a room to be finely proportioned, and feel the harmony of the dimensions without knowing them. The numbers

36, 24, and 18, having the same ratios to each other, may answer as well. Utility and convenience may require very different dimensions; but still, if we study elegance, we must have regard to the same rule. It may be necessary that the length should be to the breadth in the ratio of two to one, which is that of the octave; or three to one, which is that of the twelfth; or four to one, which is that of disdiapason, or the double octave.

If you would try, by a simple experiment, what proportion will do, only make the figure of a cross with two plain right lines, in which let the breadth be to the length as two to three, and let the point of transection, or distance of the arms from the bottom, compared with the whole length, be also as two to three; such a figure will strike the eye with its symmetry, and perhaps be the most beautiful of the kind that can be constructed; while other inharmonious measures might be introduced, which would be as ungrateful to the sight as discords are to the ear.

But to return to our great principle of *tripartition*, (if I may be allowed to make a new term for a new thing) the propriety and effects of it are so extensive, that it meets us almost every where. What is said  
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of the sight, when compared with the hearing, will hold good also of the intellect, which is another kind of sight, the sight of the mind. In oratory, does not experience teach us, that the association of three ideas satisfies the mind, as the union of three sounds satisfies the ear? No scholar is a stranger to the fulness and beauty of those three words, when set together, *veni, vidi, vici*; the effect of which is increased by a consonance of *alliteration*, each word beginning with the same letter.

In the art of reasoning, every syllogism consists of three propositions, all of which have a mutual consonance, if they make good logic. But here I am sensible that the parallel may raise a very ridiculous idea in the mind of a musical reader, if he imagines himself to hear a logical concert, by one person repeating the major proposition, another the minor, and a third the conclusion, and all speaking their parts at once. However, it is certainly true, and to our purpose, that as in musical concord two extremes have consent with the mean, and with one another, so in logic two ideas agree with a third, which is called the middle term, and all make good harmony together in the conclusion.

The principle of tripartition, as deducible from music, seems on the whole to be an actual source of pleasure to the judgment; and it is supported by such a variety of instances, that it must be founded in nature. When we are upon a right scent, truth will seem to run along before us of its own accord. There is one remarkable example which I have omitted; and it is this; that the beauty of the light, which gives beauty to all visible objects, is itself constituted by three colours, into which it divides itself, the *red*, the *yellow*, and the *blue*, which are the only original colours, all others being compounded of these; and a pure brightness is the result of them when their effects are united. These strange coincidences between the elements of different arts have often filled my mind with wonder. All I would infer from this uniformity, is, that the principle I have proposed is not imaginary, but real, in nature: and if so, your taste will certainly be improved by the application of it: for nature is the ground of art, and a sure rule of pleasure to the judgment.

With regard to composition in painting, which was the art I had chiefly in view from the beginning  
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of this letter, as a polite subject in which every gentleman should have some discernment; the beauties of it, when considered at large, consist in propriety of action; grace of attitude, which is also called *ease*; truth of proportion; and anatomical perspective. It would require another letter to explain these particularly: I shall only say, that all these beauties concur in the pieces of Sir Joshua Reynolds, perhaps more truly than they were ever found *together* in the works of any other master. It is now very fashionable to see faults in his pictures; but I think chiefly with those who are slow in distinguishing real excellence. Look at the best family pictures of Vandyke, you generally see all the figures standing inanimate, like kings and queens, with nothing to do, but to look at you from their frames: but Sir Joshua strikes out a general design, to which every figure in the composition contributes something; instead of looking at you, they are engaged in some business of their own; and while you look at them you become interested in it yourself. Thus his family pictures, instead of losing their value with age, like an almanac, will retain as long as they can last, and that even in the eyes

of strangers to the family, the merit of historical compositions.

In this copious subject I might have descended to many other particulars: but if you read Hogarth's book carefully, and attend to the few observations I have here added to it, you will acquire what Aristotle calls *δευτερον ομμα*, a *second sight*; that sight with which men of education see things, while the ignorant overlook them.

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## L E T T E R XII.

*On the Origin and Use of Fables.*

**N**OW you are employed in the exercise of raising moral observations from the matter of Æsop's Fables, it may be worth our while to enquire a little into their nature and original.

The ancients made great use of fables, and with good reason; for whatever is conceived by the mind must enter by the senses: and moral truth is never so easily understood, as when it is exemplified by a reference to some parallel case in nature, particularly to the various instincts of brute creatures, which were undoubtedly designed by the Creator to answer this end, by representing to us the several characters and colours of moral good and evil in a way which even children can understand.

The origin of fables is not very clear from the Heathen account of them. It is probable they are nearly as ancient as the history of mankind: or, at

least, that there never was a time of which we have any knowledge when they were not familiar in Palestine and Egypt, from whence they were borrowed by the Greeks and Romans.

Suidas says the fable of the Eagle and the Nightingale in Hesiod is the oldest extant, and that Hesiod was an hundred years before Æsop. The use of fables to orators is exemplified from the well-known instance of Menenius Agrippa, who reconciled the populace to the senate at Rome on occasion of an insurrection by repeating to them the fable of the *Belly and the Members*. When Themistocles admonished the Athenians not to change their magistrates, he argued from the fable of the *Fox and the Swarm of Flies*.

The Greeks were always notorious for stealing all sorts of learning, and claiming to themselves the merit of every useful invention. The *fable* is the same with the *parable*, the earliest specimen of which occurs in the book of Judges, where Jotham signifies to the people the temper and fate of an usurper under the similitude of the trees going forth to chuse them a king; in which composition inanimate things, as trees, are made to speak and reason just



as they do in the fables of *Æsop*. The fruitful trees decline the office, and the bramble offers his services and gets into power. The moral of which, as applicable to the person of Abimelech, was this; that the desire of reigning does not prevail in wise and good men, who would feed the people and protect them under the shadow of their authority; but chiefly in men of rough minds and bloody intentions, who harass the people, and are at length consumed along with them in the unjust exercise of their power.

All the parables of Christ are spiritual discourses, very nearly allied to the form of the fable, and were delivered for the sake of some moral, which would be either obscure without an illustration, or offensive to the hearers if it were delivered to them in plain terms. When the prophet Nathan approached the king, to convict him of his sin and bring him to repentance, the case would not admit of any direct reproof: so, you see, he gains his attention, and steals upon his affections, by putting a case to him, in which he seemed to have no immediate concern: and when his indignation was raised against a fictitious person, the prophet turned it upon himself,

with that striking application, "Thou art the man." Then there was no retracting: he had already condemned himself in the judgment he had passed upon the cruel offender in the parable.

As to Æsop, the reputed author of the fables which go under his name, the accounts we have of him are so obscure and contradictory, that his character itself seems to be fabulous. His fables are plainly a collection taken from different ages and different countries. In the 13th Chapter of the Wisdom of the Son of Sirach, the fable of the *Brass Kettle*, as a dangerous companion to the *Earthen Pot*, is clearly referred to, and was therefore a fable of the East. Some others which we find under the name of Æsop seem to be alluded to in the course of the same Chapter. The fable of the Fox and the Grapes must be of the same original; for we never heard that foxes are given to plunder vineyards either in Greece or Italy; but the fact was common in Palestine, and is alluded to in the Song of Solomon, ch. ii. ver. 15. The stories which are told of Æsop, that he was a *slave*, that his mistress persecuted him, that he had a golden cup, and some other particulars, bespeak a very strong resemblance

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to the history of Joseph, so famed for his wisdom in Egypt, the land of fables and hieroglyphics. The names are plainly the same; and therefore I am rather inclined to think, that the history of Æsop was either borrowed from that of Joseph; or that he was a slave or a captive of that name from the East, who brought much of the traditional wisdom of his own country with him into the West. But when all circumstances are considered, I think the former is the more probable opinion.

## L E T T E R XIII.

*On the Use of Heathen Learning.*

**I**N the middle ages of the church many Christians were very shy of the heathen writers; they were afraid lest the heathen principles of religion, morality, and policy, should be imbibed together with their poetry and oratory, and corrupt the minds of their children and scholars. Much was said of what had happened to St. Jerom; that in a vision he dreamed he was severely scourged for reading Cicero. But St. Austin, who was a man of great devotion, and one of the first scholars of the church, assures us, that one of Cicero's pieces, inscribed to Hortensius, first gave him an appetite to a more divine sort of wisdom, and that he embraced Christianity in consequence of the sentiments which that treatise had raised in his mind. Basil, another great scholar of the church, and a man of unquestioned piety, recommended the prudent reading of profane authors to some young people under his tuition. After his example, therefore, I must advise you to read with *prudence*, and with a proper



proper mixture of caution ; not trusting yourself to the reasonings of profane writers, till you are well grounded in principles of truth ; and then, as the bee can settle upon a poisonous flower without being hurt, and can even extract honey from it, so may you improve your talents for the highest purposes, and arm yourself more effectually for the defence of sacred truth, by studying profane orators, poets, and historians.

Writers are frequently rising up, with ill designs against your religion, who polish their style, and take the utmost pains to adorn it after the pattern of the best writers of antiquity. Some scholars will always be wanted on the other side, to turn the powers of composition against them ; and truth will never fail to add such a force and weight to their embellishments, that the enemy will not be able to stand against them. He that reads the speech of St. Paul to King Agrippa, and considers it as a composition, will never be persuaded that cold and beggarly diction is requisite in a Christian apologist. The apostle, though a rigid Jew by his education, discovered on occasion a familiar acquaintance with the heathen poets.

L E T.

## L E T T E R XIV.

*On the Consent between the Scriptures and the  
Heathen Poets.*

SOME ingenious men, of more wit than experience, have objected to the Christian revelation, because they find no traces of it in their favourite classical writers. The testimony of an adversary is always valuable ; but upon this occasion we have no reason to expect it from those who had their reasons for vilifying the Jews, and all that belonged to them. If we find any thing to our purpose, we must have it as it were by accident ; and of this sort much may be collected.

You have began to read Horace. If you examine his third ode, you will see him confirming the Sacred History of the Scripture in some particulars not unworthy of your notice, which could be derived to the heathens only from the fountains of Divine Revelation, or from tradition proceeding from the  
same

same original. What can we understand by the *audax Japeti genus*, but the posterity of Japhet, that son of Noah, from whom the European nations are descended? Japhet was the first father of the Greeks and Romans after the flood, as surely as Adam was the father of all mankind. Then, what is Prometheus's *fraud against Heaven*, but that offence, whatever it was, which brought death into the world? Here we have a theft acknowledged against Heaven, and all manner of evils and diseases are sent upon earth in consequence of it:

*Post ignem atherea domo*

*Subductum, macies et nova febrium*

*Terris incubuit cohors.*

And what is more remarkable, he tells us of the change which was made in the period of human life, with the reason of it;

*Semotique prius tarda necessitas*

*Lethi corripuit gradum.*

Here it is affirmed by implication, that death was originally at a greater distance, and that the divine justice

justice shortened human life slowly and unwillingly, not till the increasing corruption of the world had made it necessary to lessen the opportunities of sin. The lives of men, before the flood, were of many hundred years; but when *all flesh had corrupted his way*, then the curse took place at the flood, and man's life was contracted nearly to the present span. How should Horace know this? Or how should Hesiod know it, from whom he borrowed it? for it is precisely the doctrine of the Mosaic history? And as it carries us back to the times before the flood, of which no human history was ever written, it must have been taken either from the Scripture itself, or from some tradition, which, if it could be traced, would carry us back to the same original.

These things then, though they are *in* Horace, are not *of* Horace; nor are they of the Greeks or the Romans; but of Divine revelation: and it is remarkable, that we should meet with so many sacred doctrines in so small a compass. I take the opportunity to speak of this while the ode is under our consideration: but when you are farther acquainted with heathen learning, you will find  
abundant



abundant evidence of the same sort, which they who are disaffected to the Christian system, and would set up the classics against the Bible, will never like to hear of; but will endeavour to discountenance all such things, and dismiss them in the lump, as if they had no relation to the sacred history, but such as fancy or partiality hath given them.

LET-

## L E T T E R XV.

*On the same Subject.*

**A**S you seemed to be entertained with those passages of Horace which are parallel to the Sacred History, I shall lead you on to some more passages of the same sort in other authors; and if you should not understand all of them critically at present, I hope the time will come when you will find little or no difficulty in any of them.

Herod, you know, who was king in Judæa at the birth of Christ, slew all the children in Bethlehem. By birth and education he was a Jew, and as such would eat no swine's flesh. Macrobius, a learned heathen writer in the earliest times of the Church, tells us, that the slaughter of infants by Herod was so sudden and indiscriminate, that Herod's own child, then at nurse, was put to death amongst the rest; which fact being told to the emperor Augustus, he made this reflection upon it,

it, that "it was better to be Herod's hog than his son." You will naturally argue upon this case, that if Augustus actually said this, Herod's child was slain: if so, the infants were slaughtered in Bethlehem; Jesus Christ was born there; the Wise Men of the East came to worship him, and reported his birth to Herod, &c. as the Gospel relates; for all these circumstances hang together, and account for one another.

Tacitus and Suetonius, both bitter enemies to the Christians, agree in relating that extraordinary circumstance of a persuasion generally prevailing among the heathens about the time of Christ's birth, that a king should come from the East. The Roman senate were in such a panic at the apprehension of a king, that they were about to make a decree, that no child born in a certain year should be brought up, lest this great king should arise among themselves. Some temporizing Jews, called Herodians, flattered Herod that he was the king expected; and it is probable this opinion, which they had infused into him, made him so jealous of a rival, when the birth of Christ was reported to him. Persius, in his fifth satire, alludes to the extraordinary pomp and illumination with which Herod's

rod's birth-day was celebrated even in the reign of Nero.

But the manner in which this tradition operated upon Virgil is still more extraordinary, and little short of a prodigy. It produced from that serious and cautious poet the wonderful eclogue entitled Pollio; the imagery and expressions of which are so different from the Roman style, and so near to the language of the prophet Isaiah, that if this eclogue had been written as early as the days of Hesiod, the infidels of this time would most probably have undertaken to prove, that the prophet had borrowed from the poet. Bishop Lowth has shewn, with great judgment, that this eclogue could not possibly be meant of any one of those persons to whom heathen critics have applied it: and it does not appear how we can give any rational account of it, unless we allow that the poet had seen the predictions of the prophet, and accommodated the matter of them to the prevailing expectation of the times; ascribing them unjustly to a Sibylline oracle of heathen original, because nothing great was to be allowed to the Jews.

It will be worth your attention to consider some of the particulars minutely. He calls the time in  
which



which this wonderful person is to be born, *ultima ætas*, the *last days*, after the manner of the Scripture: God, saith the apostle, hath in *these last days* spoken unto us by his Son. According to the prophet Daniel, the Messiah was to *finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity*. So saith the poet;

*Te duce siqua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,  
Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.*

The prophet Isaiah saith, *unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace*: the sense of all which is thus expressed in the eclogue,

*Ille Deum vitam accipiet, divisque videbit  
Permixtos heroas, et ipse videbitur illis,  
Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.  
Chara Deum soboles, magnum Jovis incrementum.*

The scenery by which the prophet hath figuratively signified the times of the Gospel is minutely adopted, being extremely beautiful and poetical—*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose; the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, &c.*

*At tibi prima puer nullo mimuscula cultu*

*Errantes hederas passim cum baccare tellus*

*Mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.*

*Nec magnos metuent armenta leones.*

*Incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva.*

*Aspice venturo LETENTUR ut OMNIA saclo.*

If the prophet informs us that serpents should no longer hurt nor destroy, the poet saith the same;

*Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni*

*Occidet*

Instead of expatiating any farther on the passages of this poem, let me recommend to your perusal Mr. Pope's Imitation of it, entitled The Messiah; and let me observe upon the whole, that if Virgil had received his intelligence from Bethlehem, and had thereupon searched the prophets for materials, he could scarcely have risen higher in his description: so very extraordinary is the whole tenor of that eclogue. "Truly," says the learned Casaubon, "I must confess, though I have read that poem pretty often (on Christmas-day, after church-service, I seldom omitted it) yet I still read it with great delight and admiration; not so much for the loftiness

loftiness of the verse, which is admirable, but for the clear evidence of God's hand and providence in it, which I think none can doubt or question, but they that can believe the world was made of atoms." I borrow this observation from his treatise on *Credulity and Incredulity*, p. 144; a precious little work, which is worthy to be considered by every Christian scholar.

I have hitherto presented to you such passages as have already attracted the notice of learned men. To these I may now add some others which are less open to observation. If you examine the story of Aristæus, in the fourth book of Virgil's *Georgics*, you will see the poet opening a passage for him through the waters by a miracle; and he describes the fact in terms as much like those in the book of Exodus, as if they had been professedly taken from it:

— Simul alta jubet discedere late  
Flumina, qua juvenis gressus inferret; at illum  
Curvata in montis faciem circumstetit unda,  
Accepitque sinu vasto —

Georg. iv. 359.

This passage in the Georgics reminds me of another in Callimachus, which describes a miraculous act, parallel to that of Moses in the wilderness, when he smote the rock with his rod, and brought forth water for the people in abundance; as related Numb. xx. 11. Thus does Rhea, in a land of drought, command the earth to bring forth its waters; she lifts up her arm on high, strikes a mountain with her sceptre, which is instantly parted asunder, and pours forth water abundantly;

—ἀθανασα δια μεγαν ὑφοδι πηχυν

Πληξεν ορθ' σκηπτρῳ· το δε οι διχα πάλυ διετη,

Εκ δ' ἔχυν μεγα χευμα —

Call. Προς τον Διᾶ. l. 30.

You will think it less remarkable, that the poet Callimachus should use such language, when I tell you that he was librarian at Alexandria to Ptolemy Philadelphus, at whose command the Bible was translated into Greek by the Seventy Interpreters.

If you go forward in the same book of the Georgics, you will meet with a miraculous generation of bees out of a dead carcase:

—dictu mirabile monstrum,

Aspiciunt; liquefacta boum per viscera toto

Stridere apes utero, et ruptis effervere costis.

Ibid. l. 554.

What



What is this but the breeding of Samson's bees in the dead carcase of the Lion; as you have it, Judg. xiv. 8. *He turned aside to see the carcase of the lion; and behold there was a swarm of bees, and honey in the carcase of the lion.* The animal is an ox with Virgil, because lions were never offered in sacrifice; but the circumstance in which the whole wonder consists, is the same. Would the poet have dreamed of such a monstrous production of bees, unless we suppose that this miracle had an alliance with some other, which gave the first hint? For a miracle it is, that bees, which delight in flowers and sweet odours, should ever be found in a putrid stinking carcase.

When Troy was taken and burnt, as Virgil has related the story in the second book of the *Æneid*, you see *Æneas*, with his family, flying from the danger, while *Creusa* loitered behind, and is miraculously lost. Here we have the father of a family escaping with his household from a city on fire, and the wife is unaccountably left behind. You will say, this agreement of the circumstances might be accidental; and I cannot deny it: but the circumstances are so extraordinary, and so like to Sodom burning, and Lot flying from it with his

H 4

family,

family, while his wife is left behind, that I think we shall make the difficulty less, if we suppose, that he who wrote his *Pollio* in Hebrew imagery, and made a way by a miracle through the waters, and placed a swarm of bees in a dead carcase, was better acquainted with the Scripture than is commonly imagined.

The story of Orpheus, which is related in the fourth book of the *Georgics* with all the powers of poetry, must have been formed on some sacred tradition. There is such a mixture of circumstances, that I dare not attempt to account for them; but in the outlines of this story you have a man going down to the regions of death in the character of a mediator, to redeem a beloved wife, who had perished by a serpent concealed in the grass.

How could it possibly happen, that the idea of an intercourse between heaven and earth, and of a divine person, the son of a deity, coming down to the world in a human form, should have been so familiar to the heathens, and so universal, unless there was at first some authority to ground the persuasion upon? In the wanderings of fancy and imagination there can be no such uniformity. Horace,  
upon

upon the ground of this doctrine, makes a compliment to Augustus, supposing him to be a divine person, the son of a deity, come down from Heaven in a human form, and ready to ascend thither again upon the wings of the wind, because the world was too wicked a place for him to live in:

*Sive mutata juvenem figurâ*

*Ales in terris imitatis, alma*

*Filius Maia———*

*Serus in cælum redeas——*

*Neve te nostris vitiis iniquum*

*Ocyor aura*

*Tollat——*

The like intercourse is admitted by Ovid: Jupiter tells the assembly in heaven, how he had descended to the world in a human form, to make inquiry concerning its wickedness before the flood:

*——— Summo delabor Olympo*

*Et Deus humanâ lustro sub imagine terras.*

Met. lib. i. 212.

That it was no unusual thing for the gods to visit the earth in a human shape, was an opinion so rooted in the minds of most heathens, that the people

people at Lystra seeing the effect of a supernatural power in Paul and Barnabas, concluded immediately that they were *gods come down to them in the likeness of men.* Acts xiv. 11.

What can be more express than the testimony of Ovid, in the beginning of his *Metamorphoses*, to the Mosaic history of the creation, and the subsequent destruction of the world by the flood? The whole has such an affinity to the Scripture, that it looks more like a transcript than a compilation from traditionary fragments. Notices of the fall; and of the curse upon man and the earth; and the depravity which prevails in consequence of some change which has happened to human nature; are to be met with in several authors. Hesiod is the first who tells us, that God sent evil upon earth in return for an offence committed against heaven, in stealing from thence the use of fire, which was supposed to have been originally concealed from man, and obtained by fraud:

Τῶς δ' ἔγωγε αἰὲν ἄνθρωπον δάσσω κακόν——

Egy. l. 57.

In his *Theogony* he observes more particularly, that this evil was in a great measure derived from  
woman,



woman, whom Jupiter gave to man with that intention :

Ὡς δ' αὖτως ἀνδρεσσιν κακὸν θνητοῖσι γυναῖκα;

Ζεὺς ἐψέβημεν ἡνίκ᾽ ἦν —

l. 600.

The same author describes the primitive state of man as a golden age, in which men lived as gods, without fear or care ; when the earth brought forth all its fruits spontaneously :

Ὡς τε θεοὶ ἐζών, ἀκηδεῖα θυμὸν ἔχοντες

——— καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζειδωρὸς ἀμύρα

Αὐλομαλὴ πολλὸν καὶ ἀφθονὸν —

Epy. l. 117.

After this, men grew more and more degenerate, till an age of iron took place ; in which good men were persecuted by bad men, and all manner of wickedness and violence prevailed : then justice and righteousness forsook the earth, and fled back to their native skies, leaving behind them all kinds of evils without any remedy.

The sentence of man to labour, by the judgment of the gods upon him, is clearly alluded to by Virgil ; and *thorns* and *thistles* are introduced in the  
express

express terms of the Scripture: the lines are very remarkable;

*Mox et frumentis labor additus, ut mala culmos*

*Effet rubigo, segnisque horreret in arvis*

CARDUUS: *intereunt segetes, subit aspera sylvæ*

*Lappaque TRIBULIQUE* —

Georg. i. 150.

The necessity of a propitiatory offering, as an atonement for sin, was recognized in most of the heathen sacrifices; of which you will find such circumstantial accounts in Homer, that a ritual might be extracted from him, not very greatly differing from that of the Levitical law. The *first born of lambs* are particularly mentioned as being applied to this sacred use:

Ἀπὸν πρωτοτόκων ἐξέεν ἱερὴν ἱναλομένην.

Il. 2. 102.

All heathens entertained the opinion, that the wrath of the Deity against sin might be averted by sacrifice and mediation; and nothing but this persuasion, carried to the most extravagant height, could have prompted them to the horrible practice  
of

of offering human sacrifices; a practice which obtained in almost every heathen nation of the world. To this doctrine of mediation and atonement Horace alludes, in that passage of his second ode;

*Cui dabit partes scelus expiandi*

*Jupiter? —*

Now ask yourself, how so strange a persuasion as this could ever prevail in the world? Does your reason inform you, that there is any relation between the pardon of sin, and the smoke of an innocent animal, first bled to death, and then burnt upon an altar? No sooner does a philosopher reason upon this case, than he determines otherwise, and rejects the doctrine; of which you may see an instance in the verses of Cato;

*Cum sis ipse nocens, moritur cur victima pro te?*

*Stultitia est morte alterius sperare salutem.*

Lib. iv. dist. 14.

Yet in this persuasion, foolish as human reason pronounces it to be, all heathens persevered, from before the days of Homer to the establishment of Christianity, and afterwards. What can we think of a practice so strange, so notorious, and so universal,

verfal, but that the voice of reason was overpowered by the authority of a divine institution, which custom and tradition spread abroad through all places and all ages ?

I can tell you of another doctrine, in which the most ancient of the poets agree with the Scripture, in opposition to the dictates of human philosophy. I think it never was pretended by any of these modern writers, who have drawn schemes of natural religion for us, that government is of divine authority, and that monarchy is sacred: so far from it, that all deists, to a man, abhor the notion; and are out of patience with the Scripture for giving countenance to it. But it was an established doctrine with the first heathen writers, Homer and Hesiod, that magistrates are the vicegerents of Heaven; that government is sacred; and that kings derive their *honour* and *support* from God; as you may see by the following passages;

Εκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες —

Hes. Theog. l. 96.

— δικάσπολοι, οἷς ἴε θυμῖας

Πρὸς Διὸς ἐρηναίαι —

Iliad, α. 238.

M71a



Μηδ' ου Πηλεϊδ' ηθελ' εριζεσθαι βασιλῆι

Αχιλλῆϊ, πρὶς ὧν οὐκ ὁμοίης ἐμμορε τιμῆς

Σκηπτέχῃ βασιλεὺς, ὥς Ζεὺς κυδὸς ἰδὼκεν.

Ibid. 277.

Θυμὸν δὲ μέγας εἰς Διὸς φρεσὶ βασιλῆος,

Τίμῃ δ' ἐκ Διὸς ἐστὶ —————

B. 196.

If this doctrine is contrary to human reason, it was no human invention: if it was not invented, it was received: and if it contradicts that desire of liberty and self-government which prevails in all mankind, it must have been received on some great authority. For it is to be observed, that we are here not insisting merely on the fact, that monarchical government did actually obtain universally in the earliest ages; but also that their writers allowed it in theory as a divine institution; which is the doctrine of revelation. It was also an opinion of heathen antiquity, nearly allied to the foregoing, that property, in the most remote times, was authoritatively divided among the people by princes; not assumed at random, as it must have happened, if nations had emerged at first out of a state of nature:

*Romulus,*

*Romulus, et Liber pater, et cum Castore Pollux*

*Post ingentia facta, Deorum in templa recepti,*

*Dum terras hominumque colunt genus, aspera bella*

*Componunt, AGROS ASSIGNANT, oppida condunt.*

Hor. Epist. lib. ii. ep. i.

When you have considered all these particulars, to which I might have added a multitude of others, but that I would not exhaust your patience, you will despise the suggestion, that an affection to Greek and Roman literature has a necessary tendency to lessen the belief of divine revelation. They are but very superficial scholars, who think there are no evidences of Christianity in those writers of antiquity, whom, for their eminence, we call *classical*. This is indeed so far from being the case, that there is scarcely a doctrine of the Scriptures which they have not preserved, nor a miracle which they have not imitated, and transferred to themselves, in some form or other; insomuch, that Celsus, one of the earliest writers against Christianity, most impudently pretended, that the books of Moses were compiled from the miracles of paganism.. He might have said with equal truth, that the two tables of the Ten Commandments

mandments were borrowed from the Laws of Solon; whereas, it is certain, on the contrary, that there were no written laws among the heathens till more than a thousand years after the law of Moses; and that the laws of the Twelve Tables among the Romans, and other heathen laws of the first antiquity, were evidently borrowed from the laws of the Jews; as Josephus proves admirably well, in his Discourse against Appion. Any person may see this who will read over attentively the laws of the Twelve Tables, as they are given in page 315 of the first volume of Mr. Hook's Roman History.

## LETTER XVI.

## On Horace's Love of Solitude.

**W**HEN the course of our study carries us to the Epistles of Horace, I generally meet with some particular passage in every lesson, which engages my attention and fixes itself upon my mind, either on account of the elegance of the expression, or the value of the sentiment. In the epistle of yesterday he spoke of his country-seat as a situation which *restored him to himself*; his meaning is, that in this place of solitude and retirement, he could follow his meditations, and be happy in *his own company*; which was not the case with him when at Rome;

*Villicæ, sylvarum & mihi me reddentis agelli.*

Can any thing be more characteristic of a scholar and a man of genius than these few words? There  
never



never was a good, or a wife, or an ingenious man, who did not frequently wish to be thus put in possession of himself, in some scene of peace and quietness. In the life of a city, amidst the variety of impertinent objects, and the hurry of company, a thoughtful mind is withdrawn from itself, and under continual interruption. It is common for a man to lose his companion in a croud, and it is not uncommon for him to lose himself in the same way. When the mind is daily conversing with others, it has no opportunity of conversing with itself: these two employments differ, as the gentle murmuring of the solitary brook differs from the noise and agitation of a gale at sea. It is always a sign that the mind has some good in it, when it grows fond of retirement. The foolish and thoughtless part of mankind fly daily to others, because they have nothing entertaining in themselves: they have no interest in the subjects of religion or science of any kind, no imagery of their own to dwell upon; whence it happens, that they are never so effectually lost, as when they find themselves. Wise men have so little entertainment in company, because what is called company, and that even good

company, is so often composed of the ignorant, the illiterate, the vain, and the thoughtless, who have all fled from themselves to find one another.

If you would apply this sentiment of Horace to yourself, let it teach you, while you are young, to lay in the seeds of instruction and learning; that hereafter you may have a furnished mind to look in upon, and may find more than you lose when you go out of company. Thus you will know a pleasure by experience, which never can be known from any description of it; that of feasting upon mental matter; of pursuing truth without interruption; and of expanding and perfecting the ideas that have been laid up in the memory. This pleasure has been known and spoken of with rapture and enthusiasm in all ages by philosophers, poets, orators, and divines: and he is a miserable empty being who dies without understanding it. Few men have ever been fit to be in the world, who did not love better to find themselves out of it.

LET-

## L E T T E R XVII.

*On the Effect of Learning upon the Manners.*

TWO lines of Ovid are quoted in Lilly's Syntax, which deserve the attention of every scholar ;

*Adde quod ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,  
Emollit mores, nec finit esse feros.*

There is in most tempers a natural ferocity which wants to be softened ; and the study of liberal arts and sciences will generally have this happy effect in polishing the manners. When the mind is daily attentive to useful learning, a man is detached from his passions, and taken as it were out of himself ; and the habit of being so abstracted makes the mind more manageable, because the passions are out of practice. Besides, the arts of learning are the arts of peace, and furnish no encouragements to an hostile disposition.

There is a dreadful mistake too current among young people, and which their own inexperience

is apt to cherish and commend in one another, that a boy is of no consequence, and makes no figure, unless he is quarrelsome and renders himself a terror to his companions. They call this honour and spirit; but it is false honour, and an evil spirit: it does not command any respect, but begets hatred and aversion; and as it cannot well consist with the purposes of society, it leads a person into a sort of solitude, like that of the wild beast in the desert, who must spend his time by himself, because he is not fit for company.

If any difference arises, it should be conducted with reason and moderation: scholars should contend with wit and argument, which are the weapons proper to their profession. Their science is a science of defence; it is like that of fencing with the foil, which has a guard or button upon the point, that no offence may be given: when the sword is taken up instead of the foil, fencing is no longer an exercise of the school, but of the field. If a gentleman with a foil in his hand appears heated, and in a passion with his adversary, he exposes himself by acting out of character; because this is a trial of art and not of passion.

The



The reason why people are soon offended, is only this, that they set too high a value upon themselves: a slight reflection can never be a great offence, but when it is offered to a great person; and if a man is such in his own opinion, he will measure an offence, as he measures himself, far beyond its value.

If we consult our religion upon this subject, it teaches us, that no man is to value himself for any qualifications of mind or body; that he has numberless sins for which he ought to humble himself daily in the sight of God; and that it is his duty to think all others better than himself. If God humbled himself to exalt us, true greatness must consist in abasing ourselves, and giving honour to our company. What we call complaisance, gentility, or good breeding, affects to do this; and is the imitation of a most excellent virtue. If we obtain the good opinion of men by the shadow of a virtue, the reality will entitle us to the praise of God; which is the only true and lasting honour.

L E T T E R XVIII.

*On True and False Honour.*

**Y**OU wonder I should speak against honour, when it is the principle upon which every gentleman ought to act. I grant it; but there are two sorts of honour; the one genuine, the other spurious; the one is the honour of wise men, the other of fools. Honour, in its best sense, is the regard which a virtuous man hath to the preservation of his character: It is properly speaking the modesty of the mind, or moral modesty, which is shocked with the imputation of an unworthy action. But then you will observe, that the person who pretends to be a man of honour, must first be well informed concerning the nature of good and evil; without which he may be shocked at any appearance of goodness in himself, and glory in his shame; which is a very common case.

False

False honour may always be distinguished by these two marks; first, that it is a very irritable principle; and secondly, that it makes the opinion or fashion of the world the only rule of its conduct. The honour which preserves a man is good; the honour which inflames him is bad; and if he has no rule, but the custom of his company, whereby to judge of good and evil, his company may be very bad, and very much mistaken, and then he will be led into great absurdities, and act more like a mad man than a gentleman. According to this idea of honour, a man hates what his company hates; and thus it happens, that we find a sort of honour among thieves and pick-pockets, who, like other societies, are a rule to one another.

Without these necessary distinctions, that sense of honour, which you take to be the security of your character, will endanger the loss of it; because you will be tempted either to mean or rash actions, for fear of losing the esteem of those whose judgment is of no value.

Suppose a man, whose birth and fortune puts him amongst gentlemen, is a scandalous and notorious

torious liar. When such a person is charged with his fault before company, he ought to confess and repent of it, by all the laws of conscience, virtue, and religion. But what saith honour? It bids him persist in the denial of his guilt, and murder his accuser, if it is in his power; when the voice of reason and justice would have thanked him for the admonition.

First, a man tells a lie, to defame the character of another; then he tells a second by denying the first; then he fights in defence of his denial: and the vulgar notion of honour not only acquits him, but obliges him to it. Between this honour and the frantic fury of actual madness, there is no difference but in the name: if there is any difference, it is only this, that honour acts deliberately upon principle, and madness raves by accident and misfortune. The devil would be better pleased if the world were full of such honour; but God and all good men must detest it, as one of the greatest plagues that ever prevailed upon earth.

LET-



## L E T T E R XIX.

*On Literary Composition.*

COMPOSITION is not only a difficult task, but is indeed a miserable drudgery, when you have neither rules to direct you, nor matter to work upon; which is the case with many poor boys, who are obliged to squeeze out of their brains an exercise against the time appointed.

To store the mind with good matter, you must accustom yourself to the reading of good authors, such as historians, poets, orators, philosophers, and controversialists; the last are particularly to be studied for the well managing of an argument. The political and theological controversialists are best; but they seldom fall in the way of the younger sort of readers.

When you are to write upon any subject, the best way of entering upon it, is to set down what

what your own mind furnishes, and say all you can, before you descend to consult books and read upon it: for if you apply to books before you have laid your plan, your own thoughts will be dissipated, and you will dwindle from a composer to a transcriber.

In thinking upon a subject, you are to consider, that every proposition is an answer to some question: so that if you can answer all the questions that can be put to you concerning it, you have a thorough understanding of it: and in order to compose, you have nothing to do but to ask yourself those questions; by which you will raise from your mind the latent matter, and having once got it, you may dispose of it and put it into form afterwards.

Suppose the discovery of America by Columbus were proposed; you might put these questions upon it: How came he to think of such an expedition? What evidence had he to proceed upon? Did the ancients believe any thing that might lead him to such a discovery? What steps did he take in the affair? How was his opinion received? What happened to him in the attempt? How did it succeed? How was he rewarded afterwards? What were the consequences

consequences of this discovery to the old world, and what farther consequences may still be expected? When you have given a circumstantial answer to all these questions, you will have composed a methodical history of the discovery of America.

By this way of asking questions, a subject is drawn out, so that you may view it in all its parts, and treat of it with little difficulty, provided you have acquired a competent knowledge of it by reading or discoursing about it in time past: if not, *ex nihilo nil fit*, where no water is in the well, you may pump for ever without effect.

Subjects are either single or compounded; in other words, they are either simple or complex. A single subject consists of one notion or idea, which is to be pursued in all its branches. A compound subject is a proposition, in which some one thing is affirmed of another. These two are to be treated after different methods.

If your subject is simple, you may examine it under all the following heads, which are called *common places*: as 1st, Its relation to the senses, affections, understandings, interests, and expressions  
of

of men. 2d, Its several kinds: which are to be described and distinguished. 3d, Its causes or principles. 4th, The effects produced by it, with the ends of good or evil which it does or should aim at. 5th, Its relation to place; which comprehends the state of it in different places, or the places which have been distinguished by it. 6th, Its relation to time; which will include the different state of your subject in different ages.

Thus for example; suppose the subject to be treated of is *war*. 1st, It is the scourge of God upon the corruptions of mankind; and being so reputed is never to be undertaken wantonly and unadvisedly: but as things now are, it is in many cases unavoidable; so that every nation should be prepared by having their youth trained to arms and to all manly exercises, avoiding luxury and effeminacy, by which every nation is weakened and rendered insufficient for its own defence.

2d, There are several kinds of war; offensive, and defensive; a land war and a naval war; an invasion of one's own country by a foreign enemy: but the worst of all is a civil war, in which the people  
turn



turn their arms against one another, and so make themselves a prey to foreign enemies.

3d, The causes of war, are the encroachments and insults of some neighbouring kingdom : a want of due authority and subordination at home ; the oppression of one part of a nation by another part ; improper concessions which encourage insolence ; treaties ill advised or not sufficiently explicit, and a want of good faith and honour in observing them.

4th, The end to be obtained by every war is peace, which is often never to be obtained by lighter methods. But too frequently the ambition of princes tempts them to make war for the vanity of conquest, or to extend their dominions, or to take revenge upon an old enemy that has unfortunately given some advantage. In some cases an invasion has the good effect of rousing a nation sunk in pleasure and dissipation ; it brings them to their senses, and restores them by proper exercise to a military state.

5th, Its relation to place will give occasion to recount the most memorable wars that have been carried on in different parts of the world, and the places that have been rendered famous in history

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by battles and sieges and victories; such as the wars of Cæsar in Gaul; the battles of Cannæ and Pharfalia; the sacking of Rome by Brennus; the victory of the Christians over the Turks at Lepanto; the conquest of Mexico, and the West Indies, &c.

6th, Its relation to time will bring in the changes that have taken place in the art of war: the different modes of fighting when the Macedonian phalanx and Roman legion were thought impregnable, from the present way of determining a battle by *fire-arms* and heavy artillery, which have made defensive armour useless. The difference also may be shewn, so far as it is understood, between the Roman galleys and a British man of war.

Thus you see, that by pursuing one simple idea under the several common places above-mentioned, we are led through the whole subject and may soon throw together so many hints, that it would require a folio volume to handle them all distinctly. But here let me admonish you, that it requires more skill, and learning, and judgment to contract a subject than to expand it; and he is the best composer who

who knows how to prune away all superfluous matter.

If your subject is compound, or made up of more notions than one, it forms a *proposition*, in which some one thing is predicated (as the logicians speak) of another; as, *war is evil; old wine is better than new; old friends are better than new; old music is better than new; old divinity is better than new; and such like.* Here you have a matter *proposed*, which it is your business to *prove* and *illustrate*. In this case, your best method is,

1st, To open and explain the sense of your proposition, and distinguish your subjects, if necessary, from other subjects allied to it.

2d, To give a reason or two, to prove the truth of the proposition.

3d, To confirm your reasons by some observation on men and manners, some proverbial sentence expressing the public judgment of mankind upon the case, or some sentiment from an author of established reputation.

4th, To illustrate your subject with a simile, which is no other than some parallel case in nature; and this you are to apply to the different parts of

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your subject, if it is so apposite as to admit of such an accommodation.

5th, To add an example either from ancient or modern history, or from your own experience.

6th, Then, lastly, you are to sum up your matter, and shew the practical use of it; concluding with some pertinent exhortation.

This is the easiest way of treating a subject, and the most effectual. When I was taught to make a theme at school, we had a model of a theme of this construction composed by Mr. Dryden, which was the pattern we were obliged to follow; and I wish I could give you a copy of it. *Method* is the *light* of a subject, and *expression* is the *life* of it: and, in my judgment, an *immethodical* piece is worse than an *ill-written* one. The art is, to use method as builders do a scaffold, which is to be taken away when the work is finished: or, as good workmen, who conceal the *joints* in their work, so that it may look smooth and pleasant to the eye, as if it were all made of one piece.

Cicero in his Orations, speaking generally as a lawyer, pleads for the lawfulness of some fact, or against its unlawfulness. He begins with preparing his hearers for the subject; either winning their attention



tention by a modest approach, or shewing them how they are interested in what he has to propose to them.

In the next place, he proceeds to state the case, and lays the facts before them, with all their circumstances; or such at least as make for his purpose. This is called the *narration*.

Then he descends to *reason* upon the case; either justifying his client, or refuting the arguments on the other side. The justification and the refutation generally make two separate articles. If his speech is of the accusatory kind, his method is still the same, *mutatis mutandis*.

After all, he sums up the merits in a conclusion, which is called *peroratio*, because it reviews the several parts of the whole oration, and presses the audience with the force of the evidence, that their judgment may go with his side of the question.

Many sermons in the English language are some of the finest orations in the world. They are of different sorts; some are *moral*, some *controversial*, and some *expository*: the latter are of more general use, because they take in the two other divisions of moral and controversial, as occasion requires.

Under the first head of a discourse, the subject is opened with some general observations, and distinguished.

Under the second, it is explained and illustrated.

Under the third, the uses are shewn, and the inferences deduced, as they follow naturally from the most interesting parts of the exposition.

A sermon written after this, or some like method, will be clearly understood and easily remembered. Besides, when a thought stands in its right place, it has ten times more force than when it is improperly connected. Compositions are like machines, where one part depends upon another; if any part gets out of place, the motion is disordered, and the whole is of less effect. A rhapsody of miscellaneous thoughts, huddled together in the way of an unconnected essay, with no particular relation to the text, either makes no impression at the time when it is delivered, or leaves no instruction behind it. Not every musician, who can make a noise, and shew flight of hand upon an instrument is fit for a composer of music; neither

is every man who can *think* with freedom able to *write* with good effect.

The three different sorts of composition in prose, are the narration, the epistle, and the speech. Narration should consist of long and clear periods, descriptive of facts, with reflections sparingly intermixt. The epistle is distinguished by short sentences and an easy unaffected manner. Method is here of no great value. Speeches are different from both, consisting of reasonings, apologies, defences, accusations, refutations, and such like, enforced and ornamented as much as may be with the figures of rhetoric properly introduced: of which I shall endeavour to give you an explanation at some other opportunity.

## L E T T E R XX.

*To a young Gentleman going into the Army.*

WHAT figure can you make in any state of life, unless you adopt some certain rules for the regulation of your conduct? Wisdom lives by rule, and folly lives by chance; and this is the chief difference there is betwixt them. Such rules, therefore, as may be useful to you in the profession you are now going to take upon you, I shall give you freely, so far as they are known to me: the success must depend upon your own attention.

Do not imagine then, that because you are going to put on a sword, you may therefore throw aside your books. The army, I know, differs very much from the university, and has many gentlemen, who think they have no great occasion for learning: But be assured of this, that the learned will have the advantage of the ignorant in all the departments of  
public



public life. There are times and seasons, when they who know less, be their fortune and station what it will, must come to those who know more; and natural abilities, be they never so great, will always do better with information than without it. I would therefore advise you by all means to keep up your Greek, Latin, and French, and be adding as much as possible to your stock of philosophy and history; the uses of which are too extensive for me to enlarge upon. Some of the best scholars have been the best soldiers; as you know from the examples of Xenophon and Julius Cæsar. I gave an instance of General Wolfe's literature, and the advantage he derived from it, in another letter. You have read Cæsar's Commentaries familiarly as a school boy; consider them again as a soldier: and if you have French enough, as I hope you have, you will find the French Polybius, with Foulard's Commentaries, an excellent work for teaching the art of war.

As there are many different principles espoused in this country, some of them very dangerous to the commonwealth; you are to remember, that the grand object to a soldier is the just right of his king and country; and that if he loses his life in

the pursuit of that object, he dies in a good cause. In all your sentiments be true to the side of government and authority. Practice will soon shew you the absolute necessity of obedience in an army; and it is as necessary to the welfare of the state. When the power of government declines, and the reverence due to authority no longer prevails among the people, a nation is in the condition of a lunatic, who has lost his reason, the governing principle: and as you read of a certain dæmoniac, that he was *crying and cutting himself with stones*; just so it is with the country that is falling into anarchy: nothing is to be heard but the outcries and yellings of faction; and the hands of the people are turned against the people, to grind, and torment, and destroy themselves. We are now a distressed country: our wants are great, and our resources not improving; our enemies are many, and our friends are few: and yet it is my sincere opinion, that the worst evils the land suffers, or will suffer, are from itself; and for these there can be no remedy, till better principles shall take place amongst us, and public spirit, which is now dead, shall revive again.

That you may be able, in body as well as mind, to go through the duties of your profession, you must

must also remember, that the first qualification necessary in a soldier, is to *endure hardships*; and he that would suffer least by hard accidents and trying occasions, will find it his wisdom as well as his duty to keep himself in continual practice. The common men, who must endure many and great hardships, are never so well reconciled to them as when they see that their officer does not spare himself; who will thus secure their respect and win upon their affections; and then there will be a mutual confidence in the time of danger.

Charles the XIIth of Sweden quieted a mutiny that was beginning in his army by eating some bread that was mouldy, without making a wry face at it. He owned it was not *very good*, but proved, that it *might be eaten*, by his own example; and then his soldiers had nothing more to say.

The great point with all persons in office is, to act with temper and steadiness; to shew that they are not influenced by pride and ill-nature, but only by a sense of duty. When a man seems to think of himself more than of his business, his authority either loses ground or becomes odious. All this may be attended to by an officer, without incurring the suspicion of meanness or weakness: it will on  
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the contrary demonstrate a firmness of mind, and shew that he is fit to command others, who can thus command himself.

Drunkenness is a vice so much below a gentleman, that I hope you will want but little advice on that head. Every school-boy that makes a theme will be able to tell you why soldiers ought to be sober. He that is in liquor has lost his strength, and will easily be worsted by an antagonist of inferior ability. When drink takes away reason, a man is off his guard, and becomes a traitor against himself: he is like one who has permitted the enemy to shoot his sentinel. History will inform you how armies have fallen a prey when they were besotted with liquor; and there have been instances, when a subtle enemy has drawn an army into their own ruin by some stratagem for intoxicating them; as we kill vermin by baiting a trap.

In your dress, be neither slovenly nor fanciful. Slovenliness in the person generally denotes some defect in the mind and understanding: and as to foppishness, it is a sad mistake, when he who should be a soldier, forgets that he is a man.

With regard to your behaviour in company, (which will now be of a new sort) the best general rule



rule I can give, and which I would advise you to carry with you every where, is, not to talk too much nor too fast: for the one will be apt to make you troublesome, and the other may bring you into danger: a youth of too many words will let his tongue out-run his wit; and when he pushes on too hastily, he will fall into some embarrassment with his company, where he may neither know how to proceed with safety, nor retreat with dignity. Recommend yourself, if you possibly can, to some old respectable officer of your corps, who may admonish you with the freedom of a friend and the authority of a father, if you should be guilty of any little mistakes at first, from accidental levity or inexperience. Here my subject brings the practice of duelling into sight, a practice too horrible to be reformed by the pen. No Roman ever thought of this foolish expedient for determining a private dispute: they made it a principle to reserve their swords, to be turned against the enemies of their country; and you have a pleasant example of this in the story of Pulio and Varenus, two of Cæsar's centurions in Gaul, who had always been quarrelling, and yet never dreamed of drawing their swords  
upon

upon one another. They leaped from the ramparts, to shew which was the best man in a dispute with a croud of enemies; and so it happened, that they both retreated with equal honour; each having had the opportunity of saving the other's life. The practice of aiming at the life of a fellow-foldier for an insignificant affront, arose from the savage custom of *tryal by battle*, which the law anciently allowed, though wise and good men always detested and remonstrated against it as a disgrace to a Christian country. Till the authority of government shall effectually interpose, it is as vain to think of writing against duels, as it would be to throw an ink-bottle at a water-spout, which can be dispersed only by the shock of a cannon. To you in particular I shall observe, that though your father might be ready to resign you in the way of your duty, and for the good of your country; it would probably break his heart if you were to fall in a private dispute: and if you should ever be the unhappy instrument of sending some thoughtless companion out of life, it might break your own heart.

Upon the whole, there is certainly nothing like a proper mixture of religion in a military character,

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to keep a man within the lines of prudence and safety. And soldiers may have religion as well as other men; why else did the providence of God select Cornelius the centurion as the first gentile convert to the gospel? Devotion never appears with more dignity, than in a person whose profession places him above the imputation of a superstitious fear. I was never more pleased with any spectacle that occurred to me abroad, than when I saw many venerable grey-headed soldiers, the relics of battles and sieges, in the great hospital of the invalids at Paris, dispersed about different quarters of their chapel, and all engaged in their own private devotions at a common hour of the day. If it were required to add the greatest possible dignity to a soldier already qualified in other respects, I would put this motto upon him, "*Je crains Dieu, et je n'ai point d'autre crainte,*" *I fear God, and I have no other fear.*

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## LETTER XXI.

### *On the Practice of Devotion.*

**T**HOUGH I take this serious subject, I shall write neither a sermon nor a lecture to you. Your own experience will bear witness to the truth of a fact which has often surprised and confounded me. Nothing demonstrates an inborn depravity in human nature so much as that dread which most young people are under lest they should be thought to say their prayers, or, what would be worst of all, discovered in the act; though prayer to God is a duty as honourable in itself as it is necessary to man. Gratitude demands that we should daily return something to the Power from whom we receive all things, as life, health, strength, reason, and the capacity of enjoyment; and gratitude is a virtue which all men honour. Prudence requires that we should keep up an interest with Him from whom we expect every thing in the time  
that



that is to come ; and prudence is commendable in all. It is an honour to man that he is permitted, much more that he is invited, to address himself to his Maker. We are all desirous of being seen in the company of our betters, and speaking to them ; and as God is the source of all perfection, infinite in goodness as well as greatness, where can be the harm in having it known that we are sometimes alone in his company ? Every passion of the heart, and every power of the understanding, hope, fear, love, gratitude, admiration, reason, memory, judgment, all call upon us to keep up this intercourse ; and yet we are ashamed of it !

I would dissect this shame if I could, and discover the causes of the distemper ; but it is easier to say what it is not, than what it is. It cannot proceed from ignorance ; for there is scarcely one boy in a hundred, of fifteen years of age, who does not already know nearly as much as I have here been telling him. It cannot proceed from modesty or bashfulness ; because the same boy who is ashamed to say his prayers before one companion, will have the boldness to swear and talk nonsense before twenty. If it should be pleaded, that the appearance of hypocrisy is avoided, then it is to be feared

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the duty would be practised in hypocrisy: and what an opinion must he have of his own character, who has reason to think that the act of prayer in him must be taken for an act of dissimulation? If he thinks he is not good enough to pray to God to make him better, he must then suppose himself to be past grace, and given over to a reprobate mind; which is a dreadful prospect.

Whatever the general reason of it may be, the fact is as I say. When the eye of one boy is upon another, it has a fascinating power, like that of a rattle-snake, to deter him from the practice of devotion: and few indeed have resolution enough to assert their right of approaching their Maker, and shewing that they were born of Christian parents. And what is this fiery trial that is so terrifying? What is it but the sneer of an idle companion, of no more force nor authority than the squalling of an infant? Yet such is the servility of the human mind, on some occasions, that the apprehension of this has more weight than all the terrors our religion has suggested to us; that is, than all the threatenings of provoked Omnipotence. If nature in youth were as it should be, it would be actuated on all occasions, especially on this the greatest of all,

all, by principles of generosity; and then one boy would encourage another to the practice of that duty, without which he can never expect to succeed in this world or the other. I knew one young gentleman who had given his worthy father a promise, that he would never, upon any consideration, omit to read over some one chapter of the Bible before he went to bed: and I have reason to think he kept his word faithfully, without failing in several years, though the hour might be sometimes a little unseasonable. He is now risen to be one of the first characters in the state; and I believe his country may depend upon the best of his services.

In turning this matter over a little farther in my thoughts, it occurs to me, that none of the passions have so quick a feeling, and will bear touching so little as pride; and that pride is always applied to for the exciting of those vain terrors which get the better of devotion. "Why," says one, "you won't do so? They'll laugh at you." The power of this shallow artifice over the mind is inexpressible. The courage is blasted; and even common sense is put to flight: for what becomes of his wit who hazards the loss of all things, and chuses to be really dishonourable, lest he should be apparently ridiculous?

From the whole case this reflexion arises, that no man can be a christian and perform his duty to

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God, till he can bear to be laughed at. This is the first victory the mind is to obtain over the world : and till it is obtained, no good can possibly be done. Yet in some natures the struggle will be very sharp ; and I make no doubt but that there are many young gentlemen in the army, to whom it would be less trouble to face a cannon, than to stand the effect of a grin from a silly companion on a principle of devotion.

A popular preacher began his discourse with observing that "Prayer is a natural duty : " and thus far the observation might be true, that the duty of prayer may be inferred and enforced on the principles of what we call natural reason : but whether the practice is natural to man, let any person judge when he has weighed the following fact, which was well remarked by the author of the *Adventurer*, that beggars in the middle of the winter will sit freezing upon the stone steps at a church door all the time of divine service, rather than take shelter within it on the disagreeable condition of joining in the devotions of the place. If he has an opportunity, let him also mark the behaviour of the boys of a public school, when they are altogether at the church ; and then let him determine whether prayer, in a practical sense, is a *natural duty*.



## L E T T E R XXII.

*On Parties.*

**Y**OU hear much of parties, and you complain that you can learn very little about their principles, though they have so much to say against one another. The pretensions of different parties are frequently brought into question in a great assembly, where you may possibly have a personal concern hereafter in the business of your country; and therefore you are certainly right in desiring to understand what they are. Some, you say, are called whigs, some tories; some affect to be neutral, declaring against all parties, and saying, that men differ with one another only about words and names. Some say, whigs out of place are tories; and tories in place are whigs: which is to say, that there is no principle amongst us but that of self-interest; and thus you are left in total darkness as to the proper differences in opinion by which parties are guided.

The terms *whig* and *tory* are nick-names, with which the two parties of republicans and loyalists pelted one another, with great animosity, in the reign of *Charles* the Second; and are scarcely worth an explanation. To cut the matter as short as I can, and give you a general idea of their different views in a short compass, I must tell you, that these two parties take different sides in the great question concerning the *origin of civil government*. Some say, government is of God; by which it is meant, that his authority, in a certain sense, must take place in civil society, for its order and support; as his power prevails in the constitution of nature: and they say, there are difficulties in the subject, which can never be got over on any other supposition. Others say, that government is a human institution, and that all the power by which governors act is derived from those who are governed; as if you should say, that the captain of the ship has his commission from the crew.

They who espouse this latter opinion, have endeavoured to clear the way to it by laying down four other very extraordinary propositions; which are these following.

First,

First, that there was a time when there was no society amongst men, but they wandered about in a state of savage equality, as companions to the beasts; such as the poet describes them;

*Cum prorepserunt primis animalia terris*

*Mutum & turpe pecus* —

Hor. Sat. i. 3.

Secondly, that by some one wiser than the rest they were collected by degrees into society, and began to form a political body.

Thirdly, that when men could not be kept to their duty, they began to enact laws to keep them in order.

Fourthly, that when it was found by experience, that laws might be evaded by offences committed without witnesses, they endeavoured to work a persuasion in men's minds, that there was an invisible being, who could see into men's hearts, and would punish offences in another life, and thus the exigences of society would lead naturally to religion.

Not one of these propositions can be proved by any evidence of reason or history. As to the first of

them, if ever there was a time when men were savage, those men were in a state of degeneracy, and had *lost* the benefits of society.

As to the second, men were not originally collected into society, because they are in it by nature; inasmuch as all larger societies must have subsisted at first in single families, which would increase naturally into more extensive communities. To prevent that state of equality which is merely ideal, and never existed any where upon earth, a man and his wife, who are the rudiments of all larger society, were brought together with unequal powers; the wife being the weaker by nature, and subject to the husband; and the children, who follow the condition of the mother, are subject to the same authority. A learned and useful author, with whom you are acquainted, to avoid the force of this argument, is driven to the necessity of supposing that the wife hath an authority over the husband as the husband hath over the wife: but the contrary is self-evident; and therefore government arises of course from the condition of human nature; it is a necessary consequence of that natural law by which mankind is multiplied. The father of the family is  
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the natural ruler of it; and none can be so absurd as to suppose, that the father derives his power from the children who are begotten of him: *that* power is the gift of his Maker, and follows by necessity from the order of nature.

You will find a great advantage, and avoid infinite confusion, by thus considering government in its actual rudiments. For all great things are best understood by considering them under their smallest forms—*maxima e minimis*: and till you can find some way of reducing complicated cases to simple ideas, you will scarcely be able to understand any thing clearly.

As to the third proposition, that laws were prior to religion, it is contrary to reason, and to all positive testimony. It is contrary to reason, because the obligation of religion is greater than that of law, extending to all cases, as well secret as open. It therefore supercedes the use of laws, which are made only *for the ungodly*; for people who either have no religion, or wilfully transgress what they have. Religion therefore is prior, as the more compendious and powerful obligation.

The proposition is also contrary to positive testimony; because even heathens allow that religion was before law. We read of religion, and of religious institutions, in Homer; and that kings have their power, honour, and support from God: but we read of no laws then in being: the term is not used in *Homer's* writings. The words of *Justin* are remarkable——*Populus nullis legibus tenebatur: arbitria principum pro legibus erant*\*; and I look upon this fact as a collateral proof, that all government subsisted at first in families, and increased from domestic into national: for who but a father can want no law but that of natural affection for the government of his household and descendants? And what subjects but children either would or could submit by choice to be so governed on the same principle of a natural relation? So far as laws look upwards, they were made first in popular states, to bind those governors who had no natural affection for those who were subject to them. People who think they have nothing to expect either from the principles or the affections of their rulers, will be

\* Justin, lib. i. cap. 7.

upon their defence, and bind them as fast as they can: though mutual suspicion is productive of evils, too many to be enumerated.

You may have a view of them, if you read a discourse by *Swift* (one of the best he ever wrote) on the *contests and dissensions in Athens and Rome*: it will shew you, what is meant by a *ballance of power*—that the many may be *tyrants* as well as a single person—how mercenary orators have inflamed the people to their own ruin—how popular jealousies and tumults have led naturally to arbitrary power, &c.

Then fourthly, that religion arose from the exigencies of society, and was a political invention, brought in aid to the inefficacy of laws, it is the falsest of all. For the proof of a God was in the works of the creation, prior to all law, and therefore could never arise from political necessity. Even to this day we find a sense of religion, such as it is, and some regard to the obligations of it, in those nations who have neither laws nor writing amongst them.

This system of policy, to which some great names have given a sanction, is wrong in every step of its reasoning.

reasoning. And here I must observe besides, that there is a case of capital consideration, for which it has no provision. Every government must exercise a power of life and death; a power which no government can derive from human authority, because no man has a power over his own life, and cannot be said to give to another what he hath not in himself. So that this power can be derived only from God; who being the author of man's life, has a right to dispose of it.

An author, who belongs to the class of the *Nouveaux Philosophes*, endeavours to solve this difficulty on his own principles, in an *Essay on Crimes and Punishments*. He seems well inclined to give to every man the disposal of his own life, by his calling self-murder a *voluntary migration*, as when a man leaves his parish, or goes off as a member of some new colony. But if this should be insufficient, he argues farther, that although the power of life and death is not in any individual taken separately, yet the aggregate body may have it when they are all taken together: which in effect is the same as to argue, that though one cypher has no value, a great many cyphers together will make a sum.

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You will find this power of the multitude a notion big with absurdity, and which can never be reduced to practice, because it implies a contradiction. You must suppose that the whole aggregate of the people are unanimous, who never yet united in any one act since the beginning of the world. If they are divided, then their power is the power of the people over the people; it is the power of Peter over John, and of John over Peter; and can never be settled, till one of them has either destroyed the other, or deprived him of his liberty.

Thus I have sketched out for you the ground of dispute between the two parties who have made most noise in the kingdom. I shall neither trace the effects of their different principles, nor give you any reflections upon their characters; as that would carry me out too far, and be an invidious undertaking. So far as we have now gone, it is the part of every good subject to go, who has capacity and opportunity. It happens, that the *origin of civil government* is a subject which of late has been incomparably treated in a learned and elegant discourse by

Dr.

Dr. *Horne*, president of *Magdalen College in Oxford* \*,  
 to which I must refer you for farther information.  
 There you will find every thing that learning and  
 moderation can pertinently introduce, or at least,  
 that need be said, for the settling of the question.  
 It will give you satisfaction in point of argument ;  
 and the composition, while it instructs you in your  
 duty, will improve your English.

• See Discourses on several Subjects and Occasions, vol.

ii. disc. 12.

LET-

## L E T T E R XXIII.

*On the Character of Voltaire.*

**I**F a wicked writer is not a witty one, he will do but little mischief; for poison is never swallowed, as such, but in a fit of despair. Wit may conspire with truth to give us pleasure; as wholesome wine may be brought to table in the richest vessel: but wit, when possessed by men of bad principles, recommends falsehood, as poison is offered to us in a gilded cup:

———*Nulla aconita bibuntur*

*Ficilibus. Tunc illa time, cum pocula sumes*

*Gemmata, et lato setinum ardebit in auro.*

Juv. Sat. 10.

Truth in literature is the same thing with honesty in common life. You may admire an ingenious man; but you would wish always to be concerned with an honest one: indeed, no man can be safe in any other company. If a great genius is dishonest, his ingenuity only renders him the more dangerous:

and

and it is to no purpose to tell us that he is a man of parts; because none but a man of parts can corrupt the public with much success. No sharper, properly so called, can possibly be a fool. He that lives by his wits, must have some wits to live by: and every sharper, in proportion as he is more artful and insinuating in company, is so much the worse man. We should think it a very senseless apology for a highwayman or a cheat, to say that he is a man of genius. His talents may recommend him to rogues like himself; and they will set him at their head for his accomplishments: but his eminence in his profession will be no recommendation with honest people; who if they fall into his company, have nothing to do but to look to their pockets.

In this light I have been used to consider the celebrated Mr. Voltaire. I am pleased with a man of wit; and I admire a scholar, wherever I find him: but, at the same time, I abhor a cheat: and if he that robs a man of his money, and hinders the success of his neighbours, is detestable in society; he that would rob us of the truth, or render us unfit to receive it, is a worse character. If it is his first wish to deprive us of that truth which  
relates



relates to our interests in another life; then he differs from an evil spirit in nothing but the inferiority of his abilities.

If Mr. Voltaire should be recommended to you by any of his friends and admirers; or any of his seducing publications should fall in your way (which some Englishmen have been very forward to translate), it is proper you should know what you are to expect, that you may be prepared against the ill effects of them; and possibly you may have some opportunity of rescuing others from the snares of his sophistry.

I lately met with two volumes of a work in French, intituled *Les Erreurs de Voltaire*. They are written by the Abbé Nonnotte, a moderate and candid writer, whose remarks have gone through many editions at Paris; and I wish they were translated into English. In a preliminary discourse to the work, he has drawn the literary character of Voltaire with great calmness and judgment; allowing him all the merit he could justly claim, and distinguishing properly between his excellencies and his errors. From this preliminary discourse I shall give you a pretty large extract in another letter.

LET-

## LETTER XXIV.

*On the same.*

**T**HOUGH I could indulge myself with a quire of criticism on Mr. Voltaire, I rather chuse to give you something at present in the more humble character of a translator ; and if it does not run off so smoothly as an original composition might do, that you must excuse. We take, or seem to take, the sentiments of another with more impartiality than we advance our own ; and in the present case, I apprehend, you will suffer nothing by the exchange.

“ Perhaps it would be difficult,” says the Abbé Nonnotte, “ to find, in any age, a man of such great abilities and extensive knowlege as Mr. Voltaire. I think there never was his parallel. He was ignorant of no kind of literature : he wrote upon every thing : and though he may have fallen short of perfection in some of his productions, yet there

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is a variety of fancy which always discovers a superiority of genius. At the time of life when other young men are obliged to receive lectures from those who are wiser than themselves, he published those poetical essays which soon made him known all over France. From the pieces he wrote for the theatre, it was the general opinion, that under the reign of Lewis XV. there was no occasion to lament the loss of those great writers, Corneille and Racine, whose productions had done so much honour to the reign of Lewis XIV.

“ His works are distinguished by that brilliancy of wit, that fire and elegance of expression, which is not to be acquired by the most intense application : it is the effort of genius, and the gift of nature. After a few years, when his judgment was more mature, he ventured upon philosophy, and treated of it as if he had been nothing but a philosopher ; while his poetry would have tempted one to believe he had studied nothing but poetry all his life. But his thoughts were not confined to these : he studied history and criticism ; and made observations on the manners and principles of mankind. He attempted every thing, and his genius carried him through ;

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and notwithstanding numberless small errors, one may evcrywhere trace the genius of Voltaire.

“ A knowlege of books, too extensive to have been properly digested, with an indefatigable ardour of mind, and an extraordinary memory, emboldened him to write on all kinds of subjects. A descriptive imagination gave that force to his style, which made ample amends for the want of some lesser graces. The energy of his expressions, his striking contrasts, and the variety of objects he brings together to set off one another, surprize and engage his readers, even while they disbelieve what they are reading. This is what we are authoris'd to say of Mr. Voltaire's style.

“ For all these talents united, he was regarded as the prodigy of the age in which he lived. He might have been the idol of it ; but the frequent abuse of his talents, his extravagant assertions, with that superior tone and dictatorial carriage which he always affected over those who cultivated the sciences and belles lettres, rais'd him more enemies, censurers, and rivals, than ever he had admirers.

“ The human mind has powers with which it can raise itself to the most sublime speculations : but then  
there



there are rules to which it must be subservient, and boundaries to which it ought to confine itself. Some wits are equally bold and happy in their attempts; while others are absolutely rash and inconsiderate. It was Mr. Voltaire's misfortune to be too ambitious of exalting himself to the top of every thing, though with the neglect of those good rules and necessary regulations. A judicious reader will therefore immediately discover that the author has no fixed principles; that he has no sound logic; that he is often without true learning; always without discretion and a proper respect to things of the last importance. He will see through all those lively fallies of wit, those bold reflections, and that varnish which is so artfully spread over all his writings. These are ornaments which may dazzle and surprise light and superficial understandings incapable of reflection; but will make very little impression on those who are able to look farther and judge properly.

“Mr. Voltaire is always most extravagant when religion comes in his way; and to this great object we shall confine ourselves. Religion is that alliance and society which subsists between God and man; a society which brings with it the greatest advantages

to mankind, and lays them under the highest obligations: a man truly wise and reasonable finds nothing upon this earth so worthy of his love and veneration. Here all false principles and rash assertions are infinitely dangerous; and they are more particularly so, when they are presented in a form which flatters the pride of the human understanding; when they seem to be the offspring of truth, reason, and even wisdom itself. It is a matter of great concern to detect the falsehood of such principles, and to trace the consequences which follow them; consequences, which at best are ridiculous, and sometimes exceedingly shocking: and, lastly, to learn how to distinguish, in such serious subjects, between truth itself and that which has only the appearance of it.

“There is scarcely any one piece of Mr. Voltaire in which he has not meddled with religion; and not one in which he has treated it with any respect. He has spoke of it as a poet, an historian, and a philosopher; never as a Christian. Some profane liberties are taken in most of his poetical pieces. His General History is nothing but a satire, in which the bitterness of calumny most commonly takes the place of truth: and in his Philosophical

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Miscellanies, where he is more of a sceptic than Bayle, he opposes all true principles, and pleads in defence of all errors.

“Yet I must own he never makes a direct attack upon the truth of Christianity: his method is rather to employ all the force of his wit in support of those errors which Christianity condemns. With him, the philosophers who are called Materialists are a sort of men void of all prejudices, who only wish to conduct themselves according to the light of nature. He brings in their arguments; weighs their reasons; admires the force of them; and pronounces them to be unanswerable. Then he gives a pompous list of those famous philosophers who have been Materialists; puts in some of the Fathers of the church amongst them; and there he leaves his reader.

“All reasonable men must reckon the doctrine of fatality or destiny amongst the worst reveries of philosophy. A blind fate, which draws after it all human events; which leaves nothing to the wisdom and prudence of man; and with which all created beings are but as the springs of a machine; such a sort of destiny is a contemptible absurdity, as incon-

sistent with reason as with religion. It is impossible that Mr. Voltaire could believe such an absurdity as this, which could only take possession of a stupid Hottentot or blind Mussulman. This, however, is the subject of most of the allegorical pieces in his Miscellanies, and of those reflections which occur so frequently in his General History. A wise man must despise them; a weak man may be ensnared by them; and here the libertine finds an authority for all his extravagances.

“ But most dangerous of all, because it is best calculated to seduce people, is his way of treating religious worship, the exercises of piety, the government of the church, and the institution of its ministry. Here he employs all his wit and satire, his grave arguments and his solemn declamations, to inspire contempt and aversion for every thing of this kind. All that has been written against the Christian or the catholic religion by libertines, and those modern authors who give themselves the pompous name of philosophers, this he industriously quotes; endeavouring to make the wit more pointed, and the ridicule more outrageous. All those who are devoted to religion, or engaged in the service  
of



of it, appear to him as a set of useless mortals, who are either insignificant or vicious. If they have merit, talents, or virtues; if they have done, or now do, any service to the public; he robs them of it all, and conceals it in every picture he has drawn of their characters. But he takes special care that the world shall be perfectly acquainted with all their passions, vices, and follies, by which they have dishonoured themselves and their profession; these are the only things he dwells upon; and from hence he takes occasion to pronounce against them all.

“With Mr. Voltaire, the whole service of religion is nothing but superstition: he excepts nothing, he respects nothing. Sometimes he amuses himself with a picturesque description of the ridiculous mortifications of a *Faquir* or a *Dervise*: but the allusion is always plain enough: a reader may perceive at first sight that he has nothing to do but to change the name, and that the raillery is all pointed against devout Christians. Sometimes under another allusion, as intelligible as the former, he pretends to shew, that nothing but the folly of superstition can offer sacrifices, vows, and prayers to God for

the obtaining of what we want. Because the church does not furnish its altars with opera-girls, and those virtuous heroines who tread the stage, and contribute in more ways than one to the amusement of the public, Mr. Voltaire abuses the whole nation as weak, foolish, and superstitious. In a word, nothing was ever worse contrived in his opinion than the ecclesiastical councils, and nothing can be more unreasonable than submission to any of their determinations. He finds that Pagans were always wiser, in leaving all men at liberty to think as they pleased in matters of religion. Yet in his miscellanies of philosophy and literature, his whole business is to insult religion and all religious people: and his General History was intended for nothing else but to make religion odious: there, with every intemperate fallacy of licentiousness, and a vain ostentation of a superior taste for philosophy, he empties his quiver against it. The work is a series of calumnies, false accusations, outrageous exaggerations, and artificial concealments, to bring disgrace upon Christianity. Authors, who are either contemptible, or of suspicious characters, if they are but enemies to religion, immediately turn into oracles

oracles with Mr. Voltaire. Pagans and Musselmens are always sure to make their party good against Christians. All that has been invented and propagated by idolatry, heresy, and imposture, against the worshippers of Jesus Christ; all that has been said in defence of tyrants, who were the enemies and persecutors of the church, Mr. Voltaire revives, and reports it as authentic. But whatever he meets with to the advantage of Christians, in authors of established merit and reputation, he either suppresses, or, if he mentions it, it is disguised with such a cloud of criticism, that readers have no chance with him, unless they are aware of his artifices, and well acquainted with the subject beforehand.

“ Actuated, as he is, by this spite against the Christian religion, he gives you long details of historical events; and his representations are always unfaithful. All the commotions, and tumults, and disorders with which the world has been troubled are laid to the score of Christians; their virtues are travestied into vices; their devotion is all weakness and folly; and their slightest faults are exaggerated into unpardonable crimes.

“ But

“But he does not treat Mahometans and Pagans in this manner; these are not the colours in which they are represented. If ever there have been any real virtues among mankind, any wisdom, any reason, any justice, Mr. Voltaire can find it no where but amongst infidels and idolaters: there we must look for all our great men, our great geniuses, and real heroes. If the Protestants are ever so fortunate as to obtain his good word, this never happens but when he sets them in opposition to the Catholics: and if he is obliged to give some testimony to any of the great men we have had amongst us, he takes care to qualify their virtues with their faults, and throws in something in such a fashion as to unsay what he had seemed to allow.

“If any person undertakes to give us a knowledge of men, the laws of history require, that he should describe them as they are, by their good qualities and their defects, their vices and their virtues. To shew us only one side of them, is to be an unfaithful historian. Yet this is Mr. Voltaire’s unfair way of writing history: he shews us Christians only by their faults and their vices; Pagans, Mahometans,  
and



and heretics, only by their good qualities and great talents,

“We must likewise observe, that this indefatigable zeal to worry the Catholic religion, and defame all those that profess and regard it, does by no means prove that he would be inclined to give better quarter to any other religion. His taste is for nothing but total indifference (which we call Latitudinarianism) and universal toleration. According to him, all true philosophy consists in boasting of universal benevolence; in uttering grand sentiments of probity, justice, and honour; and then for all the rest, to set ourselves above all opinions, doctrines, and articles of faith: to believe what we please, or to believe nothing at all.

“There is no set of men, of whom he gives us so favourable a character, as of these tolerant philosophers; none whom he presents to us under such an amiable and respectable character. He always describes them as men of a milky sweetness, who breathe nothing but peace and gentleness; who neither condemn, nor blame, nor find fault with any body; men, who leave to all others the liberty of thinking as they please; and who desire nothing,  
but

but that all men should shew the same reasonable indulgence toward them, as they shew to others. These good gentlemen demand nothing but liberty to *think*; that is to say (for you must understand them right) they only demand a liberty to insult society, and mock at all religion, with impunity; to propagate all manner of blasphemies that are scandalous and injurious to the Christian faith; and to publish the wildest absurdities, in order to corrupt the opinions and morals of Christian people. And all these demands Mr. Voltaire finds to be very just and reasonable, and endeavours to prove them so in a thousand passages of his writings: especially in his Poem on the Law of Nature, his Discourse on the Soul, and his Magnificent Panegyric upon Locke.

“This boldness which pays no respect to religion, is under as little restraint in regard to the power and authority of kings. This great philosopher is no more fit to teach men to be good subjects than devout Christians. In his works, few rebellions are spoken of, which he does not either approve or palliate. Those maxims which relate to a natural equality amongst men, are so equivocal in themselves, and dangerous to government, that they ought never to be treated of but by men of wisdom and

and moderation, who can confine themselves within due bounds, and make proper distinctions. Sometimes these maxims are the language of nature and reason; and sometimes they are the cries of popular rage and sedition. Mr. Voltaire treats of them without either precaution or limitation: and there is much more of insidious affectation, than of truth and reason, in all those representations which he so often delights to make of the terrors of despotism, and the advantages of liberty. If justice and humanity are sometimes wanting toward the people in those who govern them: they who are so industrious to infuse fears and suspicions, and to spread seditious opinions among them, will rarely mend the matter; but serve in the issue to make the people more unhappy than ever. Religion gives us better lessons for this purpose, and much wiser too, than all the boasted maxims of the modern philosophy.

“When a man assumes the haughty airs of this author, and listens to nothing but the suggestions of his own fancy, he takes upon him to correct those notions which are common to all mankind; to dispute self-evident principles; to contradict opinions established on the best authority; and  
deny

deny facts which have been incontestably proved. When he sets himself up as a sovereign judge of parts and genius, of all writings and all sciences, of all arts and all learning, he must then be in danger of falling into frequent contradictions and palpable blunders. Many are the rocks on which such a bold adventurer may split; and it has not been Mr. Voltaire's good fortune to escape them."

After this, the learned Abbé proceeds to point out some of those instances in which Mr. Voltaire has contradicted himself: of which I shall give you a specimen in another letter.

L E T<sup>r</sup>



## L E T T E R XXV.

*On the same.*

I Shall trouble you no farther with Mr. Voltaire, when I have added an example or two of those frequent contradictions which occur in his writings, that you may have an idea of his peculiar genius for falsification.

“ It is rather wonderful (says our learned Abbé) that with such lively parts, and such a powerful memory, Mr. Voltaire should have fallen into such manifest contradictions.

“ In his General History \* he tells us, it never was the principle of the Roman senate or the emperors to persecute any body for the sake of their religion : that the Christian church had its freedom from the

\* Chap. v.

beginning ;

beginning; that it was permitted to extend itself, and was even protected publicly by several of the emperors.

“ But in his History of the Age of Lewis XIV \*. he says, this same Christian church resisted the authority of the emperors from the beginning, and in defiance of all their edicts, held its private assemblies in grottos and caves of the earth, till Constantine drew it up from its habitation under ground to place it by the side of his throne.

“ In one place he observes †, that human nature is every where the same at the bottom, and that nature has established a general resemblance amongst mankind. But in another place ‡, that there are nations who have no common resemblance even to their next neighbours, and that probably there are different species of men as of other animals.

He affirms that Michael Servetus §, who was burned alive by order of Calvin at Geneva, denied

\* Conec du Calvinisme.

† Hist. Gen. tom. iii, p. 194.

‡ Ibid. p. 6.

§ Ibid. tom. iii.

the eternal Godhead of Jesus Christ: and in the following page he assures us that Servetus did not deny that doctrine.

Cromwell, according to Mr. Voltaire\*, bathed himself in blood after he had usurped the royal authority; that he lived under continual apprehensions; never slept two nights together in the same chamber, for fear of being assassinated; and at length died of a fever occasioned by his anxiety.

And this same Cromwell, as Mr. Voltaire says again †, was an observer of the laws, kept the people at quiet, and died with that firmness which he had shewed all his life, leaving behind him the reputation of a great king, which covered the crimes of his usurpation."

These specimens are sufficient to shew you, how Mr. Voltaire has reported things one way or the other, as it served the present argument. When he is to apologize for the cruelties of his heathen friends, Nero is transformed into a nursing-father of the church: but when the primitive Christians

\* Melang. tom. i.

† Siecle de Louis XIV. chap. 5.

are to be blackened, then his heathens are restored to their proper character of persecutors, that the Christians may be represented as rebels against the imperial authority. To exculpate the heathens, he sets the church at liberty, and leaves it to spread itself abroad over the world: but to make the church insignificant, he sends it under ground; as if Constantine had been obliged to look for Christianity, as men look for rabbits, in a hole of the earth.

What I have here given may perhaps raise your curiosity to see more of the learned Abbé's work, and follow that candid writer through the several heads of his undertaking; which in general is judiciously executed, and very entertaining. I hear it is procured with difficulty; and I must own I think it rather a reproach to us, that I am obliged to send you to French writers for satisfaction in this argument. I wish some original work of the kind had appeared in our own language, in which Mr. Voltaire has been made to speak so largely by his English translators.

There is another celebrated work of the same sort with that of the Abbé Nonnotte, called *L'Oracle des*

*Nouveaux*



*Nouveaux Philosophes*, of which he speaks with great approbation, but as pursuing a different line from his own. The *Lettres des Juifs*, I think, have been put into English: but the chief design of them is to shew how grossly Mr. Voltaire has erred in many points of learning. Many curious anecdotes relating to the errors of Mr. Voltaire's life, were sent to the Abbé Nonnotte, but he excused himself from making any use of them; saying, that his temper was not turned to satire; and that so long as he could confute Mr. Voltaire, he had no occasion to defame him.

The portrait I gave you in my last letter will carry you beyond the person of Mr. Voltaire, and enable you to judge of some others by his example. This arch-deceiver has his followers, who deserve to be exposed to the world nearly as much as he does, having a tincture of his gall, and being well versed in his artifices. The logic of error has its forms, like the logic of the schools, and its rhetoric has its figures, which are adopted in common by inferior practitioners. But if you see through this master of arts, you will be in less danger from the undergraduates of the same profession.

As men are by nature greedy of novelty, and listen with attention to those who have a story to tell them, provided they have a pen that can furnish out an entertaining narrative, Mr. Voltaire had his reasons for preferring history as the most popular and convenient vehicle of his errors: and he found it answer. This should teach you to be upon your guard against modern writers of history; who, if they have bad principles, will sophisticate the events and characters of history, and turn them to the same purposes as he did, to poison the minds of youth, and inflame them with notions, not more adverse to truth and piety, than to the peace and prosperity of the kingdom. If you study history, either for improvement or amusement, let it be your endeavour to select those writers, who were good men as well as good historians; but be cautious how you trust yourself to a libertine: he has some ill design upon you, whether he writes from the Lake of Geneva, or from the other side of the Tweed; and it will make no difference to you, whether he is called Hume or Voltaire.

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## L E T T E R XXVI.

*On Private Judgment.*

**A**S you are intended for the church, it will be prudent to arm yourself with such considerations as may serve to keep your judgment clear and undisturbed; that you may be easy in your mind, as well as active and serviceable in your profession. In the course of your reading, some things will probably be thrown in your way to perplex you: and I can assure you, there is nothing more likely to corrupt and weaken your judgment, than some notions which have been circulated concerning judgment itself.

The case would be thought very strange, if a man were to see the worse for studying optics: but you would wonder the less at this, if he thought he had discovered, or that somebody else had discovered for him, that the eye has no need of any external aids for distinguishing the relations of objects, their colours, magnitudes, distances, and such like; but can see best by its own native light. Something of this kind has really befallen those, who

through vanity, self-interest, or some other mistake, have attributed so much to their own minds, that they have impaired their judgment. You will seldom fail to find in such persons a great desire to draw you over to their party, by tempting you to attribute too much to yourself, as they have done; and then they mean to take advantage of the consequences, which they understand well enough: that is, when you are grown conceited, they can lead you into their own opinions.

Every controversial writer against the doctrine or discipline of the church of England, (of which the late times have unhappily produced a very great number) has much to offer in favour of the *liberty*, the *authority*, and the *rights of private judgment*: a sort of flattery which easily finds its way to the hearts of the young and ignorant. Pride and indolence are always forward enough to believe, without being argued into it, that they having nothing to do upon questions of the utmost importance, but to look inwards, and ask their own opinions. This persuasion precludes the use of all those qualifications with which human judgment wants to be assisted: it is an error which breeds many others, and seldom admits of reformation; for how can he  
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be brought to see his mistake, who has made it a rule to shut his eyes ?

What we call *private judgment*, is the judgment of a private person against the sense of the public, and in opposition to established laws and regulations : in other words, it is the judgment of an individual against the judgment of the society to which he belongs. They say, every individual must have a liberty to exercise this judgment : and so I say likewise : for nothing can be enacted by public authority, which private judgment cannot arraign and condemn, if it is so disposed. When public authority has determined that two and two make four ; thoughts are free ; and an individual may deny that, or any other position whatever, and no law on earth can hinder him from so doing ; for no society can make a law that shall hinder a man from being a fool. For himself, and within his own mind, where every man holds an œcumenical council, he will judge of things as they appear to him ; and nobody alive can help it ; and therefore we are obliged to allow that every individual has a *liberty of private judgment*, that is, he has an actual liberty of contradicting all mankind, and of judging in opposition to all the law and all the reason in the world.

But now I must inform you, that they who have so much to urge in favour of this natural liberty, have pushed the matter farther, and argued for its *authority*; first, with respect to a man's self; and, secondly, with respect to the public. It has been pleaded, that a man is *justified* in his sentiments, because they are his sentiments; and that one persuasion, so far as the man himself is concerned, is as good as another; because he is not justified by the goodness of the *matter* believed, but by the *sincerity* with which he believes it. On which principle lies are as good as truth, and a chimera may answer the purpose of a sacrament.

Then, with respect to the public, it has been urged, that society must have regard, in all matters of conscience, to the judgment of every individual, and establish nothing of this kind till all the unreasonable and ignorant people in a country (and such there will be in all countries) are first agreed as to the propriety of it. Here, it is pre-supposed, as you will immediately perceive, that society has no rule to go by, in matters of conscience, but their own judgment: if there is any rule which lays a common obligation on all parties, then this reasoning falls to the ground; for, by the authority of  
that

that rule, society may proceed to establish whatever is thence necessary for the good of the whole, without suspending its judgment till individuals are satisfied.

Such are the claims of this redoubtable champion called private judgment; which protests against all creeds, and would new model all states: however, let us be of good courage, and take a nearer view of him.

The judgment of an individual will be weighty or insignificant, as it is the judgment of reason or the judgment of passion. Whatever judgment a man may have formed within himself on any particular question, it must have been formed either with the means of knowledge, or without them; if without them, it is the judgment of ignorance; and is in fact not judgment, but a rash and groundless decision of the imagination: if with the means of knowledge, then we must consider what those means are.

Knowledge is conveyed to the mind either through the bodily senses, or by conversation with men, or by reading of books. There are many great subjects in which a man's own apprehension and experience will carry him but a little way; and even  
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where experience ought to guide us, few men have spirit and industry to gather up what they learn in that manner. As to books, the majority are ignorant of languages; without which they cannot read some, nor judge critically of others. If they are engaged in secular business, they are not at leisure; and if they have not been brought up to literature, they are but ill prepared to take advantage of this source of information. It follows, therefore, that most of the private judgment which is found amongst mankind, is not original in themselves, though by its name it always affects to be so, but is borrowed from the persons by whom they have been educated, or with whom they have conversed. And this observation will teach you, by the way, that error in judgment is by no means confined to the illiterate. The common people have their mistakes, which we call *vulgar errors*: but many more monstrous and dangerous opinions are taken up by men of education than by the illiterate, in whom common sense retains that native power which art hath partly extinguished in the others, by introducing false, but specious rules of judgment, several of which I could produce.

It



It is the fate of scholars to fall early in life into the company of their elders or their equals, from whom they imbibe a set of principles to which they are soon attached, either because those principles flatter their pride, or encourage their idleness, or agree with their inclinations and appetites; and unless they are blessed with natural strength of mind and rectitude of intention, and favoured by some happy incidents, which bring new thoughts to their minds, their reading and conversation flows generally in the same channel throughout the whole course of their lives; they turn away with scorn from every thing that contradicts their favourite traditions; and thus they live and die the dupes of the first information they received, as do the Jews, Turks, and Gentoos. When they write books (if they commence authors) they bend and distort matters of fact, and represent all men and all things as they are seen through the medium of their own prejudices. If you attempt to reconcile such persons to any truth, you must treat them as men treat a one-eyed horse, turn their blind side toward an object, that they may go forward without starting.

It is not my design to write a satire upon mankind; I have compassion for all men in the worst of  
their

their mistakes, because they themselves are generally the greatest sufferers: but it is necessary for your safety, that I should represent things as they are, without fear or favour; and I am not singular in my observations. Mankind are such now as they used to be formerly; and where their nature operates freely, it will act now as it did then. Cicero said, many ages ago, *Plura enim multò homines judicant odio, aut amore, aut cupiditate, aut iracundia, aut dolore, aut latitia, aut spe, aut timore, aut terrore, aut alia aliqua PERMOTIONE MENTIS, quam VERITATE.*—"Men are much more disposed to pass a judgment of things out of hatred, or love, or inclination, or anger, or resentment, or joy, or hope, or fear, or cowardice, or any other emotion of the mind, than a regard to truth."—In virtue of this observation, he directs his young orator to trust the cause at last to an experiment upon the passions of his hearers. Though this is but a rule of oratory, it carries with it a reflection which bears very hard upon human nature. Hence it appears, that men are actuated, and often very violently, by a principle which has no regard to merit, truth, or justice. And now, I think, the question concerning the inherent *rights* of such a principle is very easily settled.

Societies

Societies who have any concern for their own welfare and safety, have nothing to do but to guard against it, and keep a jealous eye upon it; for it would confound all truth, and unhinge the world.

The grand motives on which men judge, who do not judge on principles of right reason, are custom, vanity, and self-interest. I knew a gentleman who was allowed to be a person of piety and benevolence, and yet his example afforded a striking instance of the weakness of private judgment. When he first took the sacred function upon him he went to reside in a city where Arianism had long been a fashionable doctrine: here he was touched with a pious indignation, like that of Paul at Athens, and *his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to heterodoxy*. In the execution of his office, he gave an unpopular proof of his zeal in the congregation, which at that time was much talked of. Some time afterwards he removed into another neighbourhood, where the clergy being generally addicted to the good old way, orthodoxy was no distinction: in this situation he became a zealous Arian; took up his pen in the cause; and I have been informed he was a considerable member among the gentlemen of the Feathers-Tavern. Dr. Young  
calls

calls Pride the *universal passion*: and I think we may with equal propriety say of it, that whensoever we are surpris'd with strange anomalies in the words and actions of men, otherwise good and virtuous, it is the *universal explanation*.

Custom is another principle which has a fatal effect in directing men's judgments, and keeping their minds in bondage. To account for their opinions nothing more is necessary than to ask, where they have been, and what they have been doing? Trace them back to the places of their early education, and follow them from thence into their connections in life, and you will find how they fell into their present principles. You have some knowledge of a right honourable gentleman who is regular in his morals, and serious in his behaviour, tender to his family, generous to his friends; and yet is perpetually struggling and raising disturbances, and perhaps would venture his head for the sake of some fantastical ideas in politics, which would be pernicious to his country, and will probably never do any good to himself. You think all this utterly unaccountable in a man who wants nothing that the world can give him: but I will explain the whole in a few words. When he was a boy his father  
sent



sent him to a republican seminary, by the advice of a certain bishop, who was no great friend to the church of England.

It is to be numbered among the many misfortunes and miseries of human life, that men differ so widely in their judgments, and upon such slight grounds; but you must have patience to see this, without being corrupted or perplexed: their example is rather to be lamented than imitated; and their opinions afford no argument against the truth. They judge according to the circumstances of their birth, parentage, and education: men always have done so, and always will to the end of the world. If a monkey could write, and give his judgment of the constitution of the world, and the *Histoire Generale* of the animal creation, he would produce something to the following effect. He would begin with informing you, that the monkey is the original man, and man a clumsy imitation of the monkey. Then he would describe the monkey-nature by all its perfections; the human by its wants and weaknesses. He would appeal to the order of nature itself; which has ordained that men shall plough the ground, and plant maize, for monkeys to come and eat it; which proves, by the plainest of all arguments, an undeniable

able fact, a stubborn sort of evidence, that nature intended man for a labourer, and a monkey for a gentleman; for nature never sent monkies to plough. His native freedom would demonstrate a farther superiority; for while men are gathered into societies within walls, like a fold of sheep, to be governed by laws and driven by authority, and loaded with taxes, like beasts of burthen, every monkey is his own master, and takes possession of the woods without going to the lawyers for a title.

Thus would the private judgment of a monkey argue, in opposition to the better knowlege of the human species. By monkies he would be heard with applause; and when his reputation was established as a writer, his name would be a compendious proof of his doctrine. Some things unfavourable to his system would of course be concealed: he would never tell you, that while monkies take themselves for gentlemen, mankind shoot them for thieves, and chain them to a post for a shew, amongst the other freeholders of the desert.

F I N I S.

